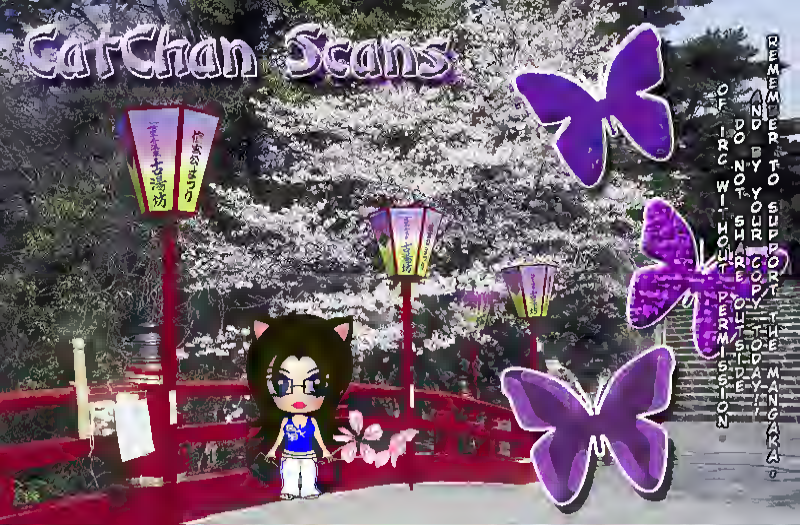

CatChan Scans
REMEMBER TO SUPPORT THE MANGAKA
AND BUY YOUR COPY OF THE GOD DAMN
DO NOT SHARE OUTSIDE OF IRC WITHOUT PERMISSION

crossroad

Story & Art by

SHIOKO MIZUKI

2

crossroad

2

crossroad

Story and art by
SHIOKO MIZUKI

Volume 2

go!comi

Translation – Kathy Schilling
Adaptation – Audry Taylor
Lettering & Design – Jake Forbes & Fawn Lau
Production Assistant – Mallory Reaves
Editor – Jake Forbes

A Go! Comi manga

Published by Go! Media Entertainment, LLC

Crossroad Volume 2
© SHIOKO MIZUKI 2004
Originally published in Japan in 2004 by Akita Publishing Co., Ltd. Tokyo
English translation rights arranged with Akita Publishing Co., Ltd.
through TOHAN CORPORATION, Tokyo

English Text © 2006 Go! Media Entertainment, LLC. All rights reserved

This edition is struck from the original Japanese film for the best possible reproduction.
Absolutely no artwork has been censored

This book is a work of fiction. Names, places and incidents are either a
product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means physical
or digital without permission in writing from the publisher

Visit us online at www.gocomi.com
e-mail: info@gocomi.com

ISBN 0-9768957-6-5

First printed in January 2006

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Manufactured in the United States of America

crossroad

— Table of Contents —

Chapter 6
Mother 7

Chapter 7
My Moke-Over Project 35

Chapter 8
Notsu's Memories (Pt 1) 73

Chapter 9
Notsu's Memories (Pt 2) 103

Chapter 10
Rhapsody of Youth 133

Chapter 11:
The Greatest Love in the World 163

Bonus Comic 1 71
Bonus Comic 2 73
Bonus Comic 3 193
Translator's Notes 195

Concerning Honorifics

At Go! Comi, we do our best to ensure that our translations read seamlessly in English while respecting the original Japanese language and culture. To this end, the original honorifics (the suffixes found at the end of characters' names) remain intact. In Japan, where politeness and formality are more integrated into every aspect of the language, honorifics give a better understanding of character relationships. They can be used to indicate both respect and affection. Whether a person addresses someone by first name or last name also indicates how close their relationship is.

Here are some of the honorifics you might encounter in reading this book:

-san: This is the most common and neutral of honorifics. The polite way to address someone you're not on close terms with is to use "-san." It's kind of like Mr. or Ms., except you can use "-san" with first or last names as easily as family names.

-chan: Used for friendly familiarity, mostly applied towards young girls. "-chan" also carries a connotation of cuteness with it, so it is frequently used with nicknames towards both boys and girls (such as "Na-chan" for "Natsu").

-kun: Like "-chan," it's an informal suffix for friends and classmates, only "-kun" is usually associated with boys. It can also be used in a professional environment by someone addressing a subordinate.

-sama: Indicates a great deal of respect or admiration.

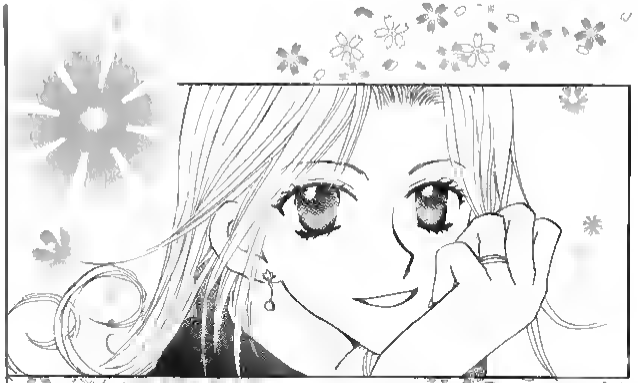
Sempai: In school, "sempai" is used to refer to an upperclassman or club leader. It can also be used in the workplace by a new employee to address a mentor or staff member with seniority.

Sensei: Teachers, doctors, writers or any master of a trade are referred to as "sensei." When addressing a manga creator, the polite thing to do is attach "-sensei" to the manga-ka's name (as in Mizuki-sensei).

Oni-: This is the more casual term for an older brother. Usually you'll see it with an honorific attached, such as "oni-chan."

Onee: The casual term for older sister, it's used like "oni-" with honorifics.

[blank]: Not using an honorific when addressing someone indicates that the speaker has permission to speak intimately with the other person. This relationship is usually reserved for close friends and family.



#8

Mother

crossroad

Cast of Characters

Rumiko Toda

Taro Toda

Kajitsu Toda

Tokihito Imanakajima

Satsuki Toda

Natsu Toda

The Story So Far...

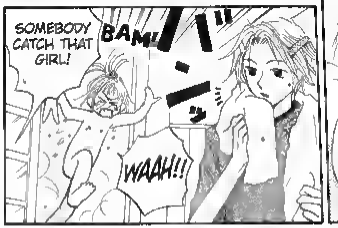
With the death of her kindly grandmother, 15-year-old Kajitsu Toda finds herself sharing her home with a little sister she's never met before and two step-brothers she hasn't seen since childhood. All four of them have been abandoned by their legal mother, Rumiko ("Run-Run"), who has run-run off with another in a series of deadbeat dads. Older brother Taro takes charge and immediately implements strict rules that no one upholds, while Kajitsu's younger brother Natsu enrolls in the same high school as her, to her deep embarrassment. back when they were kids, Kajitsu had a major crush on Natsu, but eventually sent him a nasty letter that ended their friendship. Forced now to live with each other, the two find that they no longer bear the grudges they used to – but that doesn't mean things won't heat up between them in an entirely different way.

crossroad Chapter 6: Mother

The Feudal Lord and I ①

Now I'm going to tell a little story about when I was a shrine maiden at a Shinto shrine. One day, my instructor told me, "The feudal lord is coming today!" "F-feudal lord!" I was so excited, I ran right out of the shrine to look, but found myself face to face with a regular-looking, nice old man. It turned out this man was a descendent of the feudal lord which had built this temple way back in the day. I remember running out all excited thinking it was a genuine feudal lord but it was really just a futile lord.' And that was my first experience with a so-called 'real' feudal lord.

Splendid!

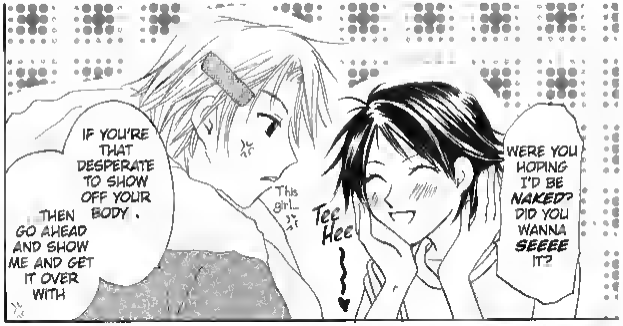


W-WAIT A MINUTE! DON'T COME OUT YET!
IT'S THE SAME THING EVERY DAY! IT'S GIVING ME A HEADACHE!
Turn
Step...
Now, now
YOU REALLY DON'T LIKE BATHS, HUH?

Sweet Potatoes! ♫ Get your sweet potatoes, hot off the grill! ♫
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW LATE I AM!
GREAT! THIS IS JUST GREAT!
HM?
tmp tmp tmp tmp tmp

AH HA HA!
IT'S NOT AS IF HE HAS ANYTHING BETTER TO DO THAN HANG OUT WITH US.
munch munch

. FOR MY STARVING LITTLE BROTHER AND SISTERS, WAITING PATIENTLY AT HOME. ♡
MMM, BAKED SWEET POTATOES, HUH?
I THINK I'LL PICK UP A FEW .


IF YOU'RE THAT DESPERATE TO SHOW OFF YOUR BODY . THEN GO AHEAD AND SHOW ME AND GET IT OVER WITH
This girl...
Tee Hee
WERE YOU HOPING I'D BE NAKED? DID YOU WANNA SEEEE IT?

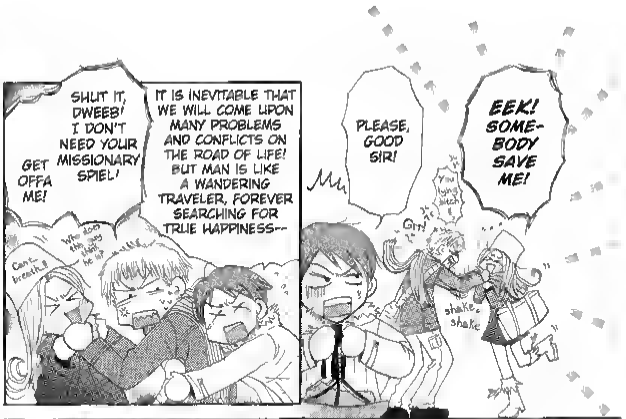
WOW HAS SHE GOT A COMPLEX ''
ER SORRY I MENTIONED IT!
UH, NO... NEVERMIND....
I'm not sexy or still I'm so plain. Not pretty at...

WE'VE BEEN MANAGING THE BEST WE CAN
TARO SURE IS LATE
This one is wrong here...
I'M SURE HE'S ON HIS WAY HOME RIGHT NOW.
IT'S BEEN THREE WEEKS SINCE I STARTED LIVING WITH MY STEP-BROTHERS
WAH!
Up we go!
Oh, how I've suffered...
Blegh!

I'LL TAKE FOUR SWEET POTATOES FOR MY ADORABLE SIBLINGS BACK HOME
HEY THERE, POTATO GUY!
WELL, YES, I JUST CAME BACK FROM A LITTLE TRIP
I JUST GOT BACK TO JAPAN YESTERDAY! ♡
MY! THAT'S A BIG ORDER!
RUN-RUN'S CHILDREN JUST LOVE BAKED SWEET POTATOES! ♡
*NOTE: Run-Run is pronounced "Rune-Rune"
WHY YOU SNEAKY...
HUH?
JUST WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I'M AFRAID TO FACE YOUR ANCESTORS IN THE NEXT LIFE! OH HO HO!
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, YOUNG MASTER. IT PAINS ME TO SEE THE GREAT IMANAKAJIMA FAMILY SINK SO LOW AS TO SELL POTATOES, EVEN WITH THE RECESSION.
GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT AND SWEET!
THESE POTATOES COME WITH THE FEUDAL LORD'S SEAL OF APPROVAL!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? IT'S THANKS TO THE MONEY I'LL EARN FROM THIS.
THRO... ♥ OH, YOUNG MASTER...
...AND LIVE FOR ANOTHER DAY.
...THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO EAT A WARM MEAL TONIGHT.
RIGHT AWAY!
MY, YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF LUGGAGE WITH YOU
I'LL HAVE FIVE, PLEASE
HEY, MR POTATO SELLER! OVER THIS WAY!
YES, MA'AM! RIGHT AWAY!
OH, IF ONLY I WERE TEN YEARS YOUNGER!

WONDER IF THE POTATO SELLER ALREADY PASSED
OH! THERE HE IS!
SWEET POTATOES! SWEET POTATOES! I LOVE SWEET POTATOES! ♡
DASH!
IT'S MAMA!!
THAT CAN'T BE YOUR MAMA. THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D BE...
SATSUKI, DON'T RUN OFF LIKE THAT!
...HERE..


GET OFFA ME!
SHUT IT, DWEEB! I DON'T NEED YOUR MISSIONARY SPIEL!
IT IS INEVITABLE THAT WE WILL COME UPON MANY PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS ON THE ROAD OF LIFE! BUT MAN IS LIKE A WANDERING TRAVELER, FOREVER SEARCHING FOR TRUE HAPPINESS--
Can't breathe!!
Why does this keep happening to me!!
PLEASE, GOOD SIR!
EEK! SOMEBODY SAVE ME!
Grrr!
You lying wench!
shake shake

HUH?
I KNOW YOU!
THIS LYING SCUMBAG HAPPENS TO BE MY MOTHER!
YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT!?

ER, I MEAN YOU'RE KAJITSU-SAN'S BROTHER
SQUEEEEEZE
Ow ow ow!
JUST WHO YOU CALLIN' "BROTHER" !?
"Don't screw with me, kid."
He looks so HAPPY
HONORED BROTHER!

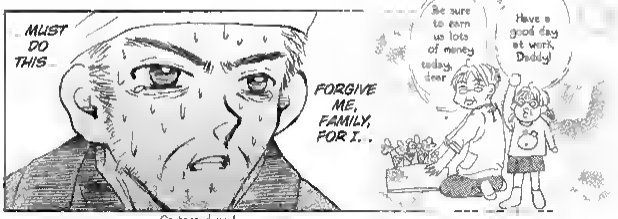
C-CAN THIS BE TRUE!?
I'M IN LOVE!
YOU SEE, I..
W- I WOULD LIKE TO GO OUT WITH HER
huff huff
Can I call you mom?
LUNGE
DUCK
BEEK! HIDE ME!
!!
カッ
ーン
Trudge... Trudge... Trudge...

I AM BUT A COMMON SWEET POTATO VENDOR WITH SIMPLE DREAMS AND SIMPLE PLEASURES. THIS IS ALL SO SUDDEN! I--
GASP!
THE AGONY OF FORBIDDEN LOVE!
HOW I WOULD LOVE TO HOLD YOU, IF YOU LET ME. BUT...!!
YOUNG MASTER, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY!
OOPS!
I got the wrong kid
Blush..
YOUNG MASTER, YOU TRULY DO SHINE AS BRIGHT AS THE MORNING LIGHT
AS SWEET AND PURE AS A RIPE, FRESH STRAWBERRY..
Dirty Old Man * Vision *
Sorry.

HM?
H-H-HELLO! NICE TO MEET YOU! LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF! MY NAME IS TOKIHITO IMANAKAJIMA, AND I GO TO THE SAME SCHOOL AS KAJITSU-SAN!
At your service!
BOW
OOH, MY LITTLE SATSUKI!
!!
♡♡
I MISSED YOU SO MUCH! HOW'S MY LITTLE PUMPKIN?
♡♡
MAMA!!
SO THIS IS KAJITSU-SAN'S MOTHER! NOW'S MY CHANCE!
sob

ER..
UM..
I ALREADY TALKED TO HER BIG BROTHER ABOUT IT THE OTHER DAY, BUT KAJITSU-SAN AND I.
Trudge
Trudge
Trudge

WHAT-EVER! ALL THAT MATTERS NOW IS...
...SATSUKI!
THAT'S NOT HOW IT WENT! THE JERK ENDED UP NOT HAVING A HOUSE — EVEN THOUGH HE PROMISED HE DID!
SO I DUMPED HIM!
...MOTHER HAD BEEN DUMPED BY HER NEWEST BOY-TOY AND HAD DECIDED TO COME RUNNING BACK HOME



Go home, dummy!

YOU!
Sneak
Sneak
Let's run away together!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY FROM ME THIS TIME!
EEK! SHE CAUGHT ME!
STOMP
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!
WHERE ARE MAMA AND ONEE-CHAN GOING?
BEATS ME I'M SURE THEY'LL COME BACK ONCE THEY'VE RUN A LAP AROUND THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD
STOMP

I SEE SHE CAME BACK, HUH?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. YOUR MOTHER ALREADY PAID
HOW MUCH DO I OWE YOU, TOKIHITO-KUN?
THANKS FOR GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY FOR US
puff puff
YOU MUST BE REALLY EXCITED!!
...THEY BOTH SAID THEY WERE BUYING THEM FOR YOU GUYS.
AND YOUR MOTHER ORDERED FIVE...
JUST NOW, WHEN YOUR BROTHER ORDERED FOUR POTATOES
I WASN'T WORRIED.
Uh...
WHAT I WANTED TO SAY IS--! I MEAN--!
ER... NEVER-MIND
SYOKN
ZZZ
Oh, my...
yawn
HOW COULD YOU LEAVE A POOR SIX-YEAR OLD GIRL HERE ALL BY HERSELF!?
BACK ME UP, SATSUKI!
...WOULD BE GOOD BIG BROTHERS AND SISTERS FOR HER
...BECAUSE I KNEW THAT ALL OF YOU...
NO KIDDING
TALKING TO HER IS POINTLESS.
She's such a ditz.

GOOD NIGHT!
ALL RIGHT!
I'LL COME BY SOON!

AFTER MY REAL MOTHER AND FATHER DIVORCED, I WAS SUDDENLY TAKEN AWAY BY AN 18-YEAR-OLD MOTHER I'D NEVER MET BEFORE
I TOOK HER HAND AND KEPT WALKING, WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE WE WERE HEADED
Sorry sir!
I ALMOST FORGOT.
TOKIHITO-KUN IS FIGHTING, TOO.

OKAY, WELL I'LL SEE YOU LATER! HAVE A NICE NIGHT!
I MEAN-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!
TOKIHITO-KUN...?
IT MADE ME REALLY ENVIOUS WHEN I HEARD THAT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, KAJITSU-SAN I KNOW YOU'LL HAVE A GOOD TIME LIVING TOGETHER
YOU SHOULD COME JOIN US FOR DINNER SOMETIME!
TOKI-HITO-KUN!

YOU'RE WELCOME HERE ANYTIME.
I CAN'T PROMISE YOU ANYTHING SPECTACULAR, BUT...

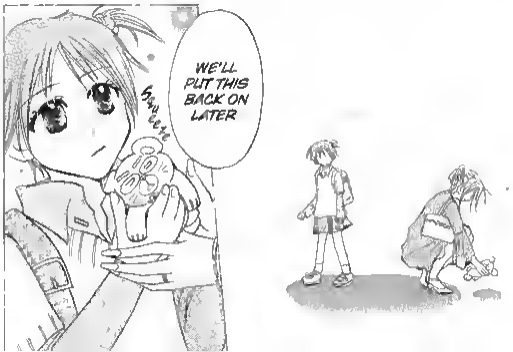
OH NO! WHAT AM I DOING !?
I'M STARTING TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THAT WOMAN!!
I CAN'T FORGET ALL THE TROUBLE SHE'S MADE!
SHIVER
MY BROTHERS... MY FAMILY...
BACK THEN, I WAS NEVER ALONE
IT'S OKAY, KAJITSU.
LET'S GO HOME.
GRANNY IS WAITING FOR US
AFTER THAT, SOMEONE WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE.
I'M SURE SHE TRIED HER HARDEST TO BE A GOOD MOTHER.
SHE WAS JUST 18-YEARS OLD -- PRACTICALLY A KID HERSELF -- BUT SHE WAS THE ONLY MOTHER I HAD.

Damn you Natsu!
Gotcha
What are you a demon?
SHE'S PUTTING SATSUKI TO BED
I think
HEY, YOU TWO
YOU SEEN MOM?

... AND LET GO OF HER HAND
IF I WENT BACK TO GET IT...
AS SHE LED ME AWAY, I DROPPED A STUFFED ANIMAL THAT WAS CLIPPED TO MY BAG.

IF I STOPPED WALKING, IT WOULD BE THE END
...I WAS SURE SHE'D LEAVE ME RIGHT THERE

BUT...
ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD.
HAD TO KEEP UP, HAD TO LOOK FORWARD
I HAD TO KEEP WALKING.


WE'LL PUT THIS BACK ON LATER

Just wait a sec!
WHAT, SO THIS IS ALL MY FAULT!?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT US TOGETHER, YOU KNOW
SERIOUSLY YOU SAVED US YOU'RE THAT TYPE OF PERSON
NO ONE'S BORN STRONG.
IT'S YOUR SURROUND-INGS THAT MAKE YOU STRONG.
KNOCK IT OFF! STOP TRYING TO KISS MY BUTT!
HA HA!
WELL, I'M GOING TO CALL IT A DAY.
I'VE GOT TWO BROTHERS I CARE ABOUT AND WHO CARE ABOUT ME.
I REALLY AM...
...PRETTY LUCKY
YUP.

AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAD ANY OTHER REASON TO BECOME A FAMILY.
IF SHE WEREN'T HERE, WE'D BE ALL OVER THE PLACE RIGHT NOW.
I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT SATSUKI
THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR RUNNING THREE LAPS
BOY, AM I POOPED...
Sigh!
Argh!
THAT'S TRUE.
...ON MY OWN
I WONDER IF I WOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO BECOME STRONG.
WITHOUT GRANNY, OR MOM, NATSU OR ONII-CHAN
IT'S FUNNY HOW LIFE WORKS LIKE THAT. I ALMOST ENDED UP ALONE

I DON'T DO...
...ANYTHING SPECIAL FOR HER
SHE TOLD ME HOW SHE'S FELT SO SAFE AND HAD A GOOD TIME HERE. ALL THANKS TO YOU, KAJITSU.
SHE'S A LOT MORE MATURE THAN SHE LOOKS
I JUST RELY ON EVERYONE ELSE
ALL I DO IS GET ANGRY AND IRRITABLE
TARO AND NATSU DO ALL THE IMPORTANT STUFF.
Oh, and her father was a good man who didn't even drink. Sigh.
GIMME A BREAK!
I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT LATELY!
No thanks to you!
Grrrr
Coochie Coochie
MY LITTLE GIRL'S REALLY GROWING UP! ♡
AW... HOW CUTE!
YES, I KNOW.
AND IT SHOWS.

Oh, boy
Ding Ding!
HEY, YOU'RE RIGHT!
nod nod
Don't tell me you're for real!
KAJITSU'S A 16-YEAR-OLD GIRL.
SHE'S NOT LIKE US GUYS.
YOU KNOW, TARO.
?
clack...

...I USED TO SHOW IT TO SATSUKI AND TELL HER ABOUT YOU GUYS
BEFORE I CAME HERE
sigh
SO THAT'S WHY SHE FELT SO COMFORTABLE AROUND US
OH
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH IT?
THIS PHOTO...

...A WONDERFUL WOMAN.

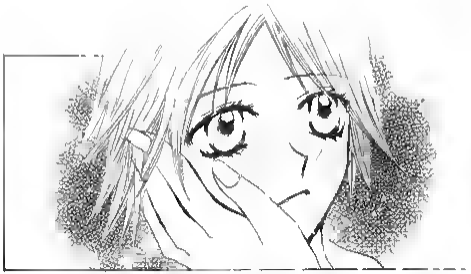
AND YOU'VE GOTTEN CUTER!
YOU'VE SOFTENED UP SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.
AND NOT JUST FOR YOURSELF
YOU'LL SHED TEARS FOR ANYONE'S SAKE...
...AND LAUGH WITH SOMEONE WHO NEEDS IT.
...WILL DEFINITELY BECOME...
SOME-ONE WHO WORKS SO HARD FOR OTHERS...
...AND IS WILLING TO LOOK AFTER THEM NO MATTER WHAT...

ALL RIGHT
THIS SURVEY WILL DECIDE WHICH CLASSES YOU'RE PUT INTO NEXT SEMESTER, SO THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE ANSWERING
AREAS OF INTEREST, HUH?
JAPANESE HISTORY, BIOLOGY, ELECTIVES, MUSIC ...NAH CALLIGRAPHY?
tap
tap
tap

...AND VOICE...

...WERE SO VERY...

...NOSTALGIC.



HER SELFISH HAND...

SHE'D ALWAYS BEEN SELFISH...

BUT FOR ONE, BRIEF MOMENT...

...MY MOTHER'S SMELL...

#7

My Make-Over Project

Future Aspirations (Please be as
To be considered a good person, and really cute!
JUST THEN, I REMEMBERED THAT CHERRY BLOSSOMS WERE STARTING TO BUD
IT'S SPRING, AFTER ALL!
rock rock
OH WELL
THAT'S NOT A DREAM THAT'S AN OBLIGA-TION!
SO, WHAT'S YOUR DREAM FOR THE FUTURE, NATSU?
WHY'D I EVEN BOTHER ASKING ?
TO GET MY TAXES BACK EVERY MONTH.
A WHOLE NEW SEASON WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

crossroad Chapter 7: My Make-Over Project

Teachers ③

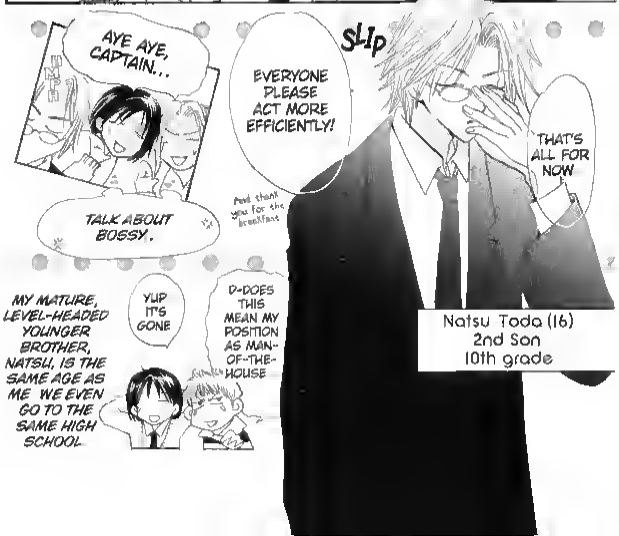
The model I used for Akai-Sensei was some random guy I saw on a trip to Beijing, China. He was letting a bunch of kids hitch a ride on the back of his truck as he puffed away on his cigarette, with his shirt halfway unbuttoned. Of course I thought he looked just AMAZING on the spot. As for Toma-kun, he's based on a celebrity, but if I said that the only difference is his hair style, then I'm sure a lot of his fans would be angry at me, so I'm not going to say who it is... Whenever I think about what Toma-kun would say, I always try to give him a "dirty old man" voice. I fear I might get carried away with it, so I'd better apologize while I still can. Just like a dirty old man would. Sorrrrrry—

DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT PISSY ATTITUDE OF HERS, THE GUYS'LL NEVER COME NEAR HER!!
IF KAJITSU DOESN'T
Yes!
BUT BEAUTIFUL, SWEET LITTLE SATSUKI HERE IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT STORY.
HEH HEH HEH
NO, YOU HAVEN'T
Taro Toda (20) Eldest Son
Satsuki Toda (8) Younger Daughter 2nd grade
EVEN IF YOUR HAIR'S STRAIGHT, YOUR PERSONALITY'S STILL AS TWISTED AS EVER.
I NEVER ASKED...
Every day it's the same thing.
I'm sick of moving this thing around.
HEY WHERE IS IT?
Table Flipping Technique
...FOR YOUR OPINION!

* SEE TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

AND STARTING TODAY...
Looks like rain.
You serious?
WE'RE ENTERING OUR SECOND YEAR
HELLO!
TOKI-HITO-KUN!
Mornin'!
THIS IS MY GOOD FRIEND, TOKIHITO-KUN.
Thud
Glomp
?
OH, DEAR FRIEND!
HE'S THE "FELIDAL LORD" FROM THE NEXT TOWN OVER.
HEY, YOU CHANGED YOUR HAIR! IT'S PERFECT FOR SPRING!
YOU LOOK SO CUTE!

DAMN! LOOK AT THE TIME!
TARO
YOU'LL BE LATE FOR WORK IF YOU LAZE AROUND HERE ANY LONGER
I feel so lonely
SATSUKI, DON'T LEAVE YOUR PEPPERS ON THE PLATE!
KAJITSU, HURRY UP AND FINISH YOUR BREAK-FAST!
DON'T FORGET THE NEW SEMESTER STARTS TODAY, YOU TWO! GET YOUR THINGS READY RIGHT NOW!
AND RUMIKO-SAN, THE LAUNDRY IS ONLY HALF DONE. FINISH IT!
NAG
NAG
NAG


AYE AYE, CAPTAIN...
TALK ABOUT BOSSY.
EVERYONE PLEASE ACT MORE EFFICIENTLY!
SLIP
THAT'S ALL FOR NOW
Natsu Toda (16)
2nd Son
10th grade
MY MATURE, LEVEL-HEADED YOUNGER BROTHER, NATSU, IS THE SAME AGE AS ME. WE EVEN GO TO THE SAME HIGH SCHOOL.
YUP IT'S GONE
D-DOES THIS MEAN MY POSITION AS MAN-OF-THE-HOUSE

Blunt
1-WEEK CRAM COURSE
It's CONFUSING one week course
The fastest way to master entrance exams
Super Lucky Aides
Lee Who • you Sleep!
The SURE FIRE technique to get get into Tokyo-U
WOULD YOU TEACHERS PLEASE STOP SENDING THESE TO MY HOUSE?
IT'S A NUISANCE!
This is getting ridiculous
GOOOOD MORNING, NATSU TODA!
GREAT, HERE THEY COME AGAIN
IRK
IRK
Go away!
DID YOU HAVE A PRODUCTIVE VACATION?
...
mmile
ACTUALLY, WE WERE THINKING OF ARRANGING FOR A TOKYO UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR WE KNOW TO BE YOUR PRIVATE TUTOR! THAT IS, OF COURSE, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED--
OH, YES, THOSE!
...
SHUT UP!
HUH? WHAT WAS THAT? DON'T BE SHY NOW COME OUT WITH IT.
VERY WELL THEN I SAID...

Homeroom Assignments
Year 2
Class 1
I'M IN CLASS 3
CLASS 1
CLASS ?
IN ANY CASE, TODAY IS THE START OF A NEW SEMESTER! IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE TO THE GLOOMY ME!
THIS IS MY FIRST STEP TO GIVING MYSELF A TOTAL MAKE-OVER!
YOU GUYS GOT IN THE ACCELERATED CLASS! THAT'S GREAT!
UH OH!
NOT THAT I SHOULD BE SURPRISED BY THAT ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO NATSU.
I'm ready to take on the world!

THUD
THUD
THUD
OH!
I'M SO--
I'M SO SORRY!!
BOW BOW BOW
HUH?
EEEK!!
BUMP
OH MY GOD! YOU'RE NOT HURT, ARE YOU?
OH!!
I-I'M SORRY! I WASN'T LOOKING WHERE I WAS GOING!

SHUT UP!
For the love of God!
...WHY DON'T YOU COME OVER TO MY PLACE BEFORE THE ENTRANCE EXAMS? NO CHARGE WHATSOEVER! YOU'LL RECEIVE 24-HOUR SUPPORT--
BUT BACK TO THE MATTER AT HAND..
THE TEACHERS ARE DESPERATE NOW THAT THEY KNOW HE HAS A SHOT
...OF GETTING INTO TOKYO UNIVERSITY
LOOKS LIKE HIS "FAN CLUB" IS GETTING FIERCER
NOT ONLY IS HE SUCH A HARD WORKER AT HOME..
...BUT HE'S ALSO SEEN AS AS A PRODIGY AT SCHOOL
EITHER WAY, IT'S THE SAME NATSU
IT'S TIMES LIKE THESE THAT MAKE ME FEEL SO APART FROM HIM

OH MY GOD, REALLY? ARE YOU SURE?
SORRY FOR SAYING SOMETHING SO STUPID!
UH, NO, NOT REALLY.
bow
bow
bow
I BET YOU GET IRRITATED...
...JUST LOOKING AT A PATHETIC GIRL LIKE ME
ER, N-NO IT'S OKAY.
Following suit.
Unable to stop.
BOW
BOW
BOW
bow

OKAY, SO MY SEAT SHOULD BE HERE...
HM?
WHAT A STRANGE GIRL
2-3
HA HA HA...
What's wrong with these two?

SHE?
SURE?
HEY!
blah
blah
blah
GIRL'S DORM
SORRY HERE, LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND.
MY GLASSES! MY GLASSES!
WAVE
WAVE
WAVE

NO, IT'S OKAY! IT WAS MY FAULT!
I'M SORRY!
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

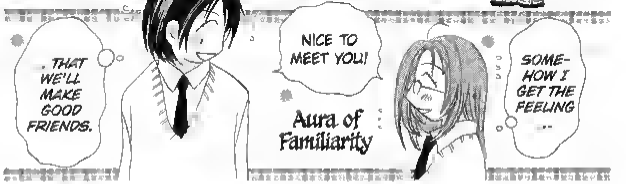
PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME YOU CAN GO REALLY.
IT'S OKAY
OH, NO!
FLOP
FLOP
FLOP
HUH?

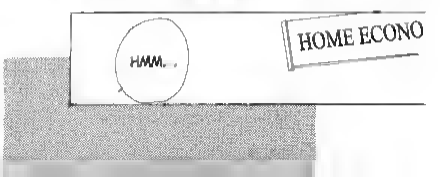
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
THERE ARE SO MANY CUTE GIRLS!
...AND A THERE'S A PRETTY BOY BEING CHASED BY THE OLD-TIMERS...
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT?
Toma!
Pretty boy

HEH HEH
I JUST HAVE A SOFT-SPOT FOR KIDS, THAT'S ALL.
HEH
HEY, I WAS KIDDING!
I SEE. SO NOW BOYS ARE ON YOUR LIST, TOMA?
I'LL MAKE A NOTE TO KEEP MY DISTANCE

I'M SORRY. HE'S BEEN A CREEP SINCE HE WAS A KID
Watch your mouth
Mommy wasn't
BONK
I WOULDN'T KNOW HOW TO SCREW A BOY ANYWAY! I DON'T GET A HAR--

ER...
NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I'M KAJITSU TODA.
OH!
I'M M-MANO NITTA.


...THAT WE'LL MAKE GOOD FRIENDS.
NICE TO MEET YOU!
SOME-HOW I GET THE FEELING ...
Aura of Familiarity


HMM...
HOME ECONO

TA-DA
Spring Festival
Akira Yokoyuki Sensei presents
LIFE INSTRUCTION
For those who feel lost or confused, come down to the Calligraphy room.
ANYWAY, IT'S WHAT I'M TRAINED FOR.
BLANK
HE SAID IT'S A TRADITION THAT'S BEEN BEEN PRACTICED EVERY YEAR. THERE MIGHT BE PEOPLE WAITING. I CAN'T GET OUT OF IT.
HEY, CHECK IT OUT. THEY'RE DOING THAT LIFE INSTRUCTION THING AGAIN
I HEARD FROM AN UPPER-CLASSMAN.
THAT IT'S JUST THIS CRAZY OLD GUY WHO RAMBLES ON AND ON ABOUT SELF-ESTEEM AND CRAP.
SLAM
CALLIGRAPHY ROOM
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE STILL DOING IT!
THEY SAID HE WAS ONLY DOING IT AS THERAPY FOR HIMSELF
IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE'LL GO.
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE... ...HE WAS VERY POPULAR.

GO DIE IN A DITCH SOME-WHERE.
IT SETS MY BODY ON FIRE WHEN WE GO TO BED EVERY NIGHT!
OH, HE ALWAYS TALKS SO PASSION-ATELY!
And I hope you've learned some manners by then!
I EXPECT TO SEE YOU THERE!
TOMA-SENSEI, AKAI-SENSEI! DON'T BE LATE FOR THE STAFF MEETING!
M-MORE IMPOR-TANTLY
DO YOU WANT ME TO START POSTING FLYERS ALL OVER JAPAN ADVERTISING THAT WE NEED A NEW MALE HOME ECONOMICS TEACHER?
DON'T FORGET YOU ONLY GOT THIS JOB BECAUSE OF YOUR OLD MAN'S CON-NECTIONS.
I'LL PASS
THANKS A BUNCH, HAMA-CHAN!
What a sweetie.
Call me Hamada!
Hey
Get off
I'M NOT A TEACHER. AND I HAVE SOMETHING TO ATTEND TO
You smell like my mom.
ISN'T HE STILL ALIVE? I THOUGHT HE JUST SLIPPED A DISK
IT WAS MY FATHER'S LAST REQUEST
YES.
YOU'RE REALLY GONNA DO IT?

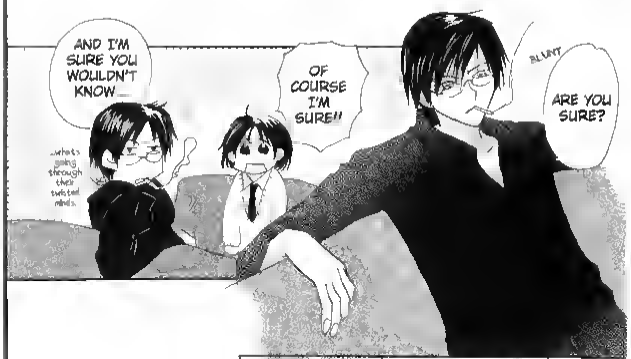
PHEW, I WAS STARTING TO GET BORED.
WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF COFFEE?
JUST TRY TO RELAX
I NEVER KNEW THE SCHOOL HAD SUCH A HOT CALLIGRAPHY TEACHER.
HUH?
PLEASE FOLLOW ME
I'm not doing anything, so it's fine.
SLAM
NOW THEN, WHAT KIND OF A PROBLEM--
AKAI!!
--SO I'M TEMPORARILY TAKING HIS PLACE
MY FATHER'S BEEN ILL.
slide
HERE'S MY CARD.
YOU'RE A CALLIGRAPHER?
YOU MEAN, YOU'RE NOT REALLY A TEACHER?

STARE
LIFE INSTRUC-TION...?
GREAT. NOW I'M WORRY-ING.
AND I'M LOST.
BUT..
NO.. BUT...
..OTHER PEOPLE'S ADVICE CAN BE IMPORTANT. AND I'VE KIND OF BEEN IGNORING EVERYONE ELSE'S OPINIONS LATELY..
STILL...
NAH, BETTER NOT IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANYTHING I'M THAT WORRIED ABOUT ANYWAY.
RATTLE
I'VE BEEN WAITING
HELLO THERE DON'T HESITATE TO COME IN.

HM?
OH, HE'S GAY.
HE'S TOTALLY GAY
HMPH
WOO-HOOOOO!
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY!
THIS SCHOOL WAS DEFINITELY THE ANSWER!
SQUEEZE
YOU WANNA SEE MORE?
I'LL SHOW YOU IF YOU SHOW ME FIRST! DEAL?
Now where was the exit?
I KNEW IT. I SHOULD JUST GO HOME.
Sorry! Sorry!
YOU BIG MEANIE! HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO ACT AFTER YOU LEAD ME ON LIKE THAT?
HA HA HA
..UNTIL AFTER YOU'VE PAID YOUR DEBT TO ME AND CLEANED UP YOUR ACT?
HOW ABOUT YOU SAVE THOSE KIND OF JOKES..
Head-butt!!!
Ouchie!
TOSS
ポイッ
AND QUIT INTERRUPTING ME WHILE I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF WORK, YOU ANNOYING LITTLE MONKEY!
SLAM
NOW, WHERE WERE WE?
UH, SORRY ABOUT THAT.
Brunette Heritage
How mean!
...I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE THE KIND OF GUY WHO TAKES PLEASURE IN A GIRL'S TEARS.
ER, NOTHING. JUST THAT AT FIRST GLANCE...
UH...?
WHAT IS IT?
THE TRUTH IS, I'D TAKE A SWEET HIGH SCHOOL GIRL OVER THAT SUPER-CLINGY MONKEY ANY DAY OF THE WEEK.
Obviously you don't.
DO YOU REALIZE HOW RUDE IT IS TO SAY SUCH THINGS TO A COMPLETE STRANGER?
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA
...BUT, ACTUALLY, NOW YOU SEEM LIKE A REALLY RESPONSIBLE GUY.
Your rating just went up!

I'VE NEVER HAD A GOOD FATHER, SO I DON'T TRUST MEN
IT'S NOT LIKE I KNOW THE GUY, SO WHY SHOULDN'T I JUST LET IT ALL OUT?
ACTUALLY, I DON'T TRUST HUMANS AS A WHOLE!
BUT GETTING BACK TO THE POINT...
I'VE GOT A HALF-ASSED MOTHER, A TYRANT FOR AN OLDER BROTHER.
MY ATTITUDE PROBLEM PROBABLY COMES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT I'VE BEEN RAISED IN.
...AND NOW MY GRANNY, WHO I LOVED MORE THAN ANYONE, IS DEAD!
Don't forget to breathe.
WHEEZ-E
HUFF
WHEEZ-E
HUFF...
AND THAT'S WHY--- THAT'S WHY--!
THE ONLY SANE PEOPLE IN THE HOUSE ARE MY LITTLE BROTHER AND SISTER! BUT BECAUSE WE'RE NOT EVEN RELATED BY BLOOD AND HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER FOR SEVEN YEARS, I STILL HAVE TO BE ON GOOD BEHAVIOR EVEN IN THE HOUSE!

I'M RELIEVED
.....
A WALL...
I WAS AFRAID YOU'D SEE ME AS SOME SORT OF IMPENETRABLE BRICK WALL
I'M A LITTLE WORRIED THAT I'M THE ONE WHO COMES OFF AS A BRICK WALL WITH MY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE
HEH.
UH, THE TRUTH IS...
IT WAS JUST YOUR IMAGINATION!
NO, I'M SURE YOU JUST LAUGHED.
I AM NOT LAUGHING.
YOU JUST LAUGHED, DIDN'T YOU!?
The brick wall just laughed!


AND I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T KNOW...
...what's going through their twisted minds.
OF COURSE I'M SURE!!
BLUNT
ARE YOU SURE?

BECAUSE YOU'RE TIRED OF LIVING
LOOK, I KNOW IT'S CONSIDERED "PROPER" FOR GIRLS TO ACT SO INNOCENT, BUT I BET YOU'RE ONLY ACTING THAT WAY...
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. I FORGOT
WANT ANOTHER CUP OF COFFEE?
I'M SERIOUS! I MEAN IT!
And isn't the school a normalizing zone?
GULP
GULP
OH, SURE
Thanks

STARES AND WAITS

HUH?

NOW I SEE WHY HE'S FRIENDS WITH THAT PERV FROM EARLIER
NOW, I DON'T KNOW HOW OLD YOUR BROTHERS ARE, BUT WHEN I WAS A HIGH SCHOOLER, THE WHOLE DAMN WORLD REVOLVED AROUND SEX
I was a very tainted youth
MY BROTHERS ARE PERFECT GENTLEMEN
I'm not worried about them
...I COULDN'T HELP BUT IMAGINE SOME PERVERTED STUFF GOING ON
SORRY, SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT WHEN YOU SAID YOU LIVE WITH SIBS WHO HAVE NO BLOOD RELATION
Oh...
DEFLATED

pat pat
YOU'RE A GOOD KID.
MAYBE I'M NOT AS BAD AS I THOUGHT!
I'M GONNA TRY NOT TO BE SUCH A PAIN TO MY FAMILY.
ha ha ha
YEAH
SENSEI
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A BIT CRUDE
..YOU'RE REALLY A GOOD PERSON

IT'S RAINING
HERE
TAKE THIS WITH YOU
I GUESS HOLDING IT IN WAS MORE STRESS..
..THAN I THOUGHT
I SHOULD COMMEMORATE THIS. AFTER ALL, YOU WERE MY FIRST VISITOR.
..DID I HELP YOU AT ALL?
YOU'RE VERY KIND.
I FEEL A LOT BETTER NOW THAT I'VE GOT ..THAT OFF MY CHEST!
YES! YOU HELPED A LOT.

YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE IF YOU'RE TOO TRUSTING
STOP BY AGAIN SOMETIME
CRUNCH
HUH?
KAJITSU-SAN?
NAH, IT'S JUST THAT THIS ROOM IS DUSTY.
KOFF
KOFF
SORRY, IS IT THE SMOKE?
MUST BE ALL THE OLD BOOKS
I'VE GOT SOME CANDY. THAT'LL HELP
HEH HEH
KOFF
YOU'RE LETTING YOUR GUARD DOWN
IS IT OKAY... IF I STOP BY AGAIN SOMETIME?
HERE. PLEASE TAKE ONE.
JUST LIKE WITH YOUR BROTHERS AT HOME...
Aa aaah ?
HUH?
TRUST ME
OPEN YOUR MOUTH

SNIFF
NO, I DON'T SMOKE--
OH!
THERE WAS ALSO THIS CRAZY PERV WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE A TEACHER!
AND THEN--
KAJITSU, HAVE YOU BEEN SMOKING?
OH, IS THAT SO?
MMM
I JUST UH... WENT TO THE CALLIGRAPHY ROOM THAT'S ALL
turn
I HAVE THE FEELING...
...SCHOOL'S GONNA BE...
...A LITTLE MORE FUN FROM NOW ON

AS NICE AS HE IS, TOKIHITO-KUN IS STILL A GUY
SO ARE NATSU AND TARO
ARE ALL GUYS REALLY THE SAME?
HEY, TOKIHITO-KUN, WANT SOME CANDY?
I JUST HAD A LITTLE SOME-THING TO DO
I THOUGHT YOU'D GONE HOME ALREADY
I had my club meeting
TOKIHITO-KUN, TOO?
THE SWEET TASTE OF THE CANDY THAT SENSE! GAVE ME
CRUNCH
..FILLED MY MOUTH.

THERE'S A GIRL I MET, AND I THINK WE'LL GET ALONG!
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA BE PRETTY GOOD!
WELCOME HOME.
HOW WAS YOUR NEW CLASS?
I'M HOME!
I SAVORED IT FOR AS LONG AS I COULD...
...UNTIL I FINALLY HAD TO SWALLOW.

I WANT TO..
I WONDER WHY I COULDN'T TELL NATSU ABOUT HIM—?
SCRITCH
April 4
Ouch
...THANK HIM
Sigh
SCRITCH
IT'S PRETTY SAD TO THINK THAT THE OLDER YOU GET, THE MORE SECRETS YOU KEEP
WHEN I WAS A KID, I WAS ABLE TO TELL NATSU EVERYTHING
I USED TO THINK THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE TO WRITE IN MY DIARY ANYMORE..
I USED TO DREAM OF IT.
BUT NOW, THE WORDS JUST STAY AS THOUGHTS...
IF WE EVER GOT TO LIVE TOGETHER AGAIN
Diary

NATSU...
Y-YEAH
I KNOW THAT
BECAUSE, YOU KNOW...
I DON'T JUST SEE YOU AS MY BIG SISTER
IF THERE'S ANYTHING BOTHERING YOU..
YOU CAN ALWAYS COME TELL ME
THUMP
HUH?
COULD HE..
COULD HE MEAN..?

BONK
Nice punch line.
Tell me anything!
I SEE YOU AS MY LITTLE SISTER

NATSU'S CHANGED, TOO.
—GIVE THIS TO HIM ANOTHER TIME.
I'LL HAVE TO...
I GET THE FEELING SOMETHING'S CHANGING INSIDE ME, SLOWLY BUT SURELY.
BUT I DON'T THINK ANYONE CAN TELL.
P.E. class held outside today!!

Come on Sensei, lets hang out!
I CAN'T STAND GIRLS WITH SUCH THICK MAKEUP
RIGHT, RIGHT NOW GET BACK TO YOUR CLASSES AND STUDY
Are why that? Drain the blood
SLAM
I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE.
YIKES!
I GUESS THIS MEANS...

...AND I CAN NEVER BRING MYSELF TO SAY THEM.

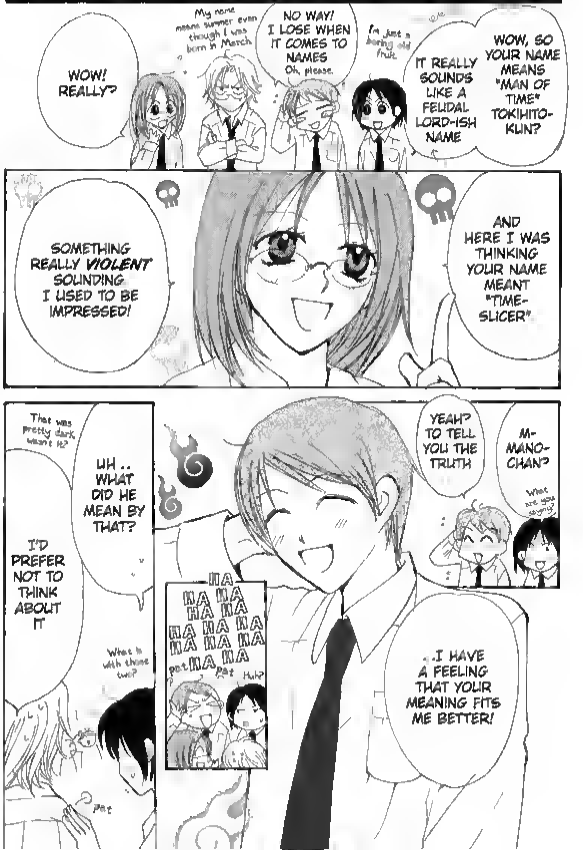
Bonus Comic I: Don't Call me Mama!

I WONDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF THOSE GUYS ACTUALLY DID CALL HER "MAMA"...
I WANT TO HEAR YOU TWO CALL ME "MAMA" FOR ONCE!
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP CALLING ME BY MY FIRST NAME?
Talk about rude!
OKAY, RUMIKO-SAN, I'M OFF TO SCHOOL.
RUMIKO, GET TO WORK!
READ THIS BOOK TO ME!
MAMA!
SO CUTE! SO CUTE!
Love of a Fool
Heehee
PUFF
PUFF
PUFF
IN A FOREST BASKED IN SILVER MOONLIGHT, LET'S HOLD A SECRET PARTY, MAMA!
What the—? They turned all pretty
WE BAKED YOU A SPECIAL CHIFFON CAKE WITH A SPECIAL INGREDIENT THAT ONLY GROWS ON THE HIGHEST PLATEAUS IN JUNE, MAMA!
Natsucusae (alias)
Tarospiel (alias)
IS THIS KID REALLY OKAY?
?
PANIC PANIC
O' CURSED EMISSARY OF HELL!
MAY GOD STRIKE YOU DOWN!
She's sort of scaring me...
Yakiton!
The End

IT'S LIKE 80 DEGREES OUT!
HEY, NATSU. WHAT'S WITH THE LONG SLEEVES?
AREN'T YOU HOT?
IT'S SOMETHING HE WON'T TALK ABOUT TO ME... TARO OR ANYONE ELSE.
...THAT ONLY NATSU AND THOSE HE LEFT BEHIND SHARE...
...HIDDEN BENEATH THOSE LONG SLEEVES HE ALWAYS WEARS?
YEAH?
WEIRD WHATEVER, MAN.
I JUST...
I DON'T LIKE SHORT SLEEVES.
IS IT SOME MEMORY...

#8 Natsu's Memories (Part One)

Bonus Comic 2: Name Time!


WOW! REALLY?
My name means summer even though I was born in March
NO WAY! I LOSE WHEN IT COMES TO NAMES Oh, please.
I'm just a boring old fruit.
IT REALLY SOUNDS LIKE A FEUDAL LORD-ISH NAME
WOW, SO YOUR NAME MEANS "MAN OF TIME" TOKIHITO-KUN?
SOMETHING REALLY VIOLENT SOUNDING I USED TO BE IMPRESSED!
AND HERE I WAS THINKING YOUR NAME MEANT "TIME-SLICER"
That was pretty dark, wasn't it?
UH.. WHAT DID HE MEAN BY THAT?
I'D PREFER NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT
What is with those two?
Pat
NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA
pat NA NA
Pat
Huh?
YEAH? TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH
M-MANO-CHAN?
What are you saying?
..I HAVE A FEELING THAT YOUR MEANING FITS ME BETTER!

crossroad Chapter 8: Natsu's Memories (Part I)

Scenery at a Crossroads 3

With there being a connection between Natsu's Memories and a railway crossing in this chapter, it made me wonder if in real life, there are such connections between railway crossings and the seasons of one's life. I was initially worried about doing this chapter because I didn't have any reference material for a railway crossing, so I had my assistant, Kise-san, take pictures of one that was near her house, and we both worked diligently to draw it. It was so grueling that my arm ended up in agony and Kise-san became exhausted, but we finished it in time. And then after we were done, totally out of the blue, my assistant was asked to draw a railway crossing for a completely unrelated project! Boy, was she surprised! But why in the same month? It must've been a sign from God! Not sure what it means though. Just please keep sending us good messages, God!

HUH?
YOU STARTED MAKING US BENTO BOX LUNCHES AGAIN?
OH! YUP SEE.
...MOM'S LUNCHES ALWAYS COME OUT TOO MESSY AND SHE ALWAYS PUTS IN SOMETHING WEIRD LIKE GYOZA OR SASHIMI
MAYBE SO... BUT WHEN KAJITSU DOES IT...
...BUT, I MEAN--!
It's just so embarrassing
...I CAN'T REALLY FAULT HER FOR THE QUALITY OR TASTE...

A LETTER?
SORRY, NA-CHAN I FORGOT TO TELL YOU, A LETTER CAME FOR YOU YESTERDAY.
I THINK IT'S FROM YOUR UNCLE TAKAAKI-SAN'S HOUSE
The little brother of Natsu's real father
SNATCH
HUH...?
LET ME SEE! LET ME SEE!
TAKAAKI TSUGE? ISN'T HIS THE FAMILY YOU USED TO LIVE WITH?
SO IT'S FROM CANADA, HUH?
THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, KAJITSU!

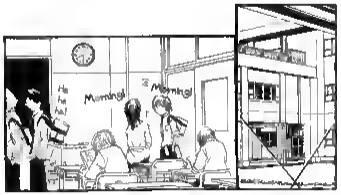
SLAP
OH MY GOD, THAT'S SO EMBARRASSING!
WHAT!?
HA HA HA!
KAJITSU I WAS JUST THINKING YOU'D MAKE A GOOD WIFE SOMEDAY
WAVE
WAVE
TOOT
HA HA!
AH HA HA!
STOMP
Box-lunch
OH MY!
FOR SOME REASON, KAJITSU'S BEEN...
What a waste...
Nice smile
...STRANGELY CHEERFUL AS OF LATE

HERE! I HAVE A BENTO BOX LUNCH JUST FOR YOU! ♡
NA-KUN! ♡
GOOD MORNING! ♡
ZOOP
ずおっ

WHAT?
DROP

HEY, YOU!
YOU'RE THE FIRST KID WHO WENT TO THAT LIFE INSTRUCTION THING, RIGHT?
Mystas
SPLAT
Memory of Love shoves into your face!
I WONDER IF SHE LEFT THE INSIDES LIKE THAT
Well, I guess I deserved it.
SHIVER
PLEASE STOP PUTTING A HEART SYMBOL ON THE END OF EVERY SENTENCE
It's so gooey
AH YES, OF COURSE KAJITSU
Thanks
IT'S FROM KAJITSU-SAN! ♡
She asked me to give it you.
SHE MUST BE ANGRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER
KAJITSU

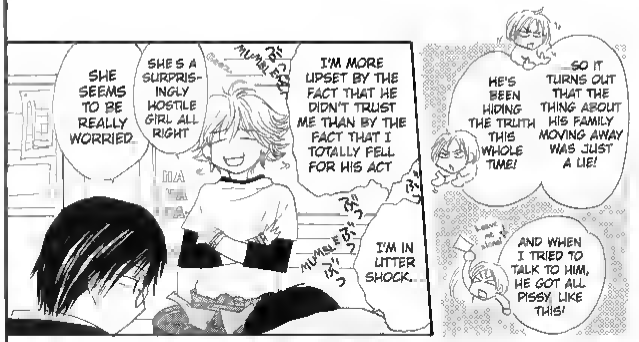
TURN
I'VE GOT CLASS DUTY THIS WEEK, SO I'LL GO ON AHEAD
NATSU.
HE SAID HE CAME HERE BECAUSE HIS FAMILY WAS MOVING OVERSEAS.
I'M SORRY
ER NO, NO!
IT WAS MY FAULT!
HUH...?
AND THERE WAS A JAPANESE STAMP ON IT.
BUT THAT LETTER WASN'T AIRMAIL.


Morning!
Morning!

WHAT'S GOING ON...?

TOMA HERE OWES ME QUITE A LOT, SO I'M HAVING HIM PAY ME BACK THROUGH OBEDIENT SERVITUDE.
Not to mention I love okonomiyaki.
LUNCH DUTY
IF YOU REALLY WANT ME TO BE YOUR SLAVE THERE ARE OTHER THINGS I CAN DO.
Sorry for intruding.
WOW
Oh, please try some of my boxed lunch
SPECIAL TECH-NIQUES? I see.
I WOULDN'T MIND TRYING OUT SOME OF MY SPECIAL TECHNIQUES. Hee-hee.
FEEL FREE TO TRY THEM OUT ON A PIG OR A SHEEP!
I WANT TO KILL THIS LITTLE MONKEY SO BAD..
YOU MEAN YOU GET OFF DOING IT WITH PIGS AND SHEEP!?
WHAT!?

I JUST CAME TO RETURN THIS UMBRELLA TO AKAI-SENSEI.
I'M KAJITSU TODA
CALLIGRAPHY
THE NAME'S TOMA.
What's up to?
OH! YOU'RE THAT HOME EC TEACHER WHO ONLY SPOKE OBSCENITIES EVERY TIME YOU OPENED YOUR MOUTH!
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AKAI, HE'LL BE IN AFTER LUNCH TODAY
WATCH YOUR MOUTH, KID TALK ABOUT RUDE!
HUH?
..IN THE HOME EC ROOM IF YOU'RE INTER-ESTED HEY..
OR YOU COULD JUST JOIN US FOR LUNCH
SIZZLE
DO YOU LIKE OKONOMIYAKI?


SHE SEEMS TO BE REALLY WORRIED
SHE'S A SURPRISINGLY HOSTILE GIRL ALL RIGHT
I'M MORE UPSET BY THE FACT THAT HE DIDN'T TRUST ME THAN BY THE FACT THAT I TOTALLY FELL FOR HIS ACT
I'M IN UTTER SHOCK...
HE'S BEEN HIDING THE TRUTH THIS WHOLE TIME!
SO IT TURNS OUT THAT THE THING ABOUT HIS FAMILY MOVING AWAY WAS JUST A LIE!
AND WHEN I TRIED TO TALK TO HIM, HE GOT ALL PISSY LIKE THIS!

AND, TOMA, THIS THING'S ONLY HALFWAY COOKED...
YOU WANT ME TO GET A STOMACH ACHE?
MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST LEAVE IT ALONE.
THAT'S PROBABLY THE BEST THING TO DO.
GUESS I SHOULD TAKE HER SERIOUSLY...
MUMBLE

HE PROBABLY CAME TO LIVE WITH YOU BECAUSE HE'S RUNNING AWAY FROM SOMETHING
WHEN YOUR BROTHER LIED TO YOU, HE PROBABLY WASN'T...
...DOING IT FOR FUN.
ACTUALLY...
SENSEI, I BET YOU'RE THINKING, "JEEZ, WHAT A BORE! I CAN'T WAIT 'TIL THIS IS OVER!" RIGHT?

SHUDDER
BY THE WAY, TODA-SAN
HOW ARE THINGS GOING AT HOME --?
CLATTER
ARE YOU SURE SHE'S ALLOWED OUT OF HER CLOISTER?
NO PROBLEM I'M ONLY GETTING ABOUT A THIRD OF THE CONVERSATION ANYWAY!
SORRY FOR THE WASTE OF SPACE SITTING NEXT TO YOU, TODA-SAN
Just ignore him
munch munch
Such a pure girl.
You too, Ariel.

I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED.
OH... I SEE...
...UPSET ME
ACTUALLY, JUST THIS MORNING...
...SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT REALLY..

NO WAY TO AVOID THIS ONE
JUST TRY TO KEEP IT SIMPLE
ER, YEAH SURE
I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THIS!!
PLEASE LISTEN, SENSE!!!
In so stressed out here!

YOU REALLY ARE A DEMON
RIGHT TO THE CORE.
And it's because you say it so honestly that it's scary
HA...
...MAKES ME WANT TO SEE HER CRY BIG FAT TEARS WHILE I GAG HER WITH A SILK CLOTH

I SEE.
SUBARU GOT ACCEPTED INTO K HIGH SCHOOL, HUH?
OH..
THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.
GUESS AUNT AND UNCLE CAN FINALLY RELAX
Thank you!
MAYBE SENSEI'S ADVICE WILL REALLY HELP.
Doesn't understand a thing
BUDDY

YOU COULD CONFRONT HIM IF YOU WANTED TO
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?
AND IF HE IS...
ぶんぶんぶん
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
No, I can't do that
Hm.

JUST LOOKING AT SUCH PURE INNOCENCE...
SORRY, NICE LITTLE GIRLS AREN'T MY THING
YOU THINK YOU GOT A CHANCE WITH HER?
SHE'S A GOOD KID.
Thanks for the lunch!

HE WOULD LOOK PEOPLE STRAIGHT IN THE EYE WHEN TALKING TO THEM. NEVER A HINT OF SHYNESS.
SUBARU. .
WE'RE THE SAME AGE, BUT YOU WERE BORN IN MARCH, SO THAT MAKES ME THE OLDER BROTHER!

SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
UH . N-NICE TO MEET YOU.
I WONDERED IF I'D TURN OUT THAT WAY TOO, IF I STAYED IN A HAPPY HOUSEHOLD LIKE HIM.

LET'S GO!
MY ROOM'S UPSTAIRS C'MON! I'LL SHOW YOU MY BOOK COLLECTION!
MY KIND AND WISE COUSIN...

SUBARU.
SUBARU
HI! NICE TO MEET YOU!
I'M SUBARU!
SUBARU!!
I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET NATSU! HE'LL BE LIVING WITH US FROM NOW ON!
WE'VE MET BEFORE, HAVEN'T WE. REMEMBER ME?

I-I'M FINE.
JUST DON'T...
TELL AUNTIE OR UNCLE ABOUT THIS
OKAY?
ruffle ruffle
YOU GOT A LETTER.
...FROM KAJITSU
DID YOU TWO HAVE A FIGHT OR SOMETHING?
PLUTTER
YOU'VE BEEN WRITING LETTERS BACK AND FORTH FOR A WHILE NOW, RIGHT?
I hate you, Natsu
I hate you
I never want to see you again
IT WAS MY FAULT.
NOW I CAN'T SEE KAJITSU EVER AGAIN!
I CAN'T GO HOME. WHAT DO I DO?

NA-CHAN HASN'T BEEN EATING MUCH LATELY
I THINK HE'S LOST SOME WEIGHT.
I COULD NOT STAND THE IDEA OF MAKING THEM SAD.
WITH MY GENTLE UNCLE AND AUNT...
...WE MADE THE PICTURE-PERFECT FAMILY
I COULDN'T STAND TO DO ANYTHING TO UPSET THEM.
HOW 'BOUT I GO ASK HIM?
HE SAYS HE'S ON A DIET, BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM VERY ENERGETIC
I WONDER IF SOMETHING IS BOTHERING HIM
NATSU?
I'M COMING IN
...NATSU?
CLACK

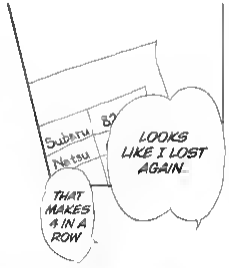
SORRY, A LOSS IS A LOSS!
HA HA HA
NO FAIR! YOU BEAT ME BY JUST 12 POINTS!
SUBARU!
Woo hoo!
I GOT 475!
I WON!
463.
MATH, 82. CLASSIC LIT, 93
BRINGS ME TO A GRAND TOTAL OF
Midterm
Another record of consecutive scores broken!
KO
OW!
Y...
YOU'RE BLEEDING!
OUCH
PAPER CUT.
YEAH
LET ME SEE IT.

DON'T CRY, OKAY?
DON'T FORGET, I'M HERE FOR YOU.
MOM AND DAD, TOO
PAT PAT
IT'LL BE OKAY, NATSU
CHEER UP.
I'LL ALWAYS BE ON YOUR SIDE
WHICH IS WHY...
SUBARU'S CHEERFULNESS WAS ALWAYS A LIFESAVER.
THE ONE THING THAT WAS MAKING ME HAPPY IN THIS HOUSE. . WAS SUBARU.
GRR...
...I THINK YOU SHOULD KEEP UP THE "DIET" THING
Tell about your golden opportunities!
YOU JERK! DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT MY FEELINGS!?
This isn't the time for stupid jokes!!!
HA HA HA
YOU'RE CRUSHING ME!
TACKLE
HA HA!
SNIFF
Ah, the love of a brother
A Peeping Tom

I'D GLADLY TAKE YOUR PLACE-- BE YOUR SUBSTITUTE.
I WANT TO BE LIKE SUBARU
LET'S GO TO SLEEP
GOOD-NIGHT
COME ON, DON'T BE STUPID. NATSU
I WANT TO BE LIKE...
...MY BELOVED SUBARU
...I CAN JUST FORGET ABOUT EVERY-THING ELSE.
THAT WAY..
ABOUT MY FAMILY, MY REASON FOR LIVING, AND THE THINGS THAT HURT ME
AND MOST OF ALL, I CAN FORGET ABOUT KAJITSU.

SUCK
ぱくっ
HEY!
...AND YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE ON THE BRINK
SUBARU!
IF ANYTHING BAD EVER HAPPENS TO YOU..
OF LIVING OR DYING...
PLEASE TELL ME
I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
AAAH! HE'S GONNA EAT ME! OW OW OW OW!
He caught a Natsu!
shake
shake
Ow! Ow! Ow!
NATSU!

BUT, SUBARU...
YOU HAD A COLD WHEN YOU TOOK THE TEST, REMEMBER?
THAT'S WHY.
IT'S A DIFFERENCE IN ABILITY
NO, THAT'S NOT WHY


Subaru
Natsu
LOOKS LIKE I LOST AGAIN...
THAT MAKES 4 IN A ROW

NO...
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE...

JUST YOU WAIT, THOUGH! I'LL CATCH UP TO YOU IN NO TIME!
WAVE
WAVE

YOUR GRADES HAVE BEEN SKY-ROCKETING!
BESIDES! YOU'VE BEEN WORKING REALLY HARD, NATSU!

PLEASE PROTECT ME, SUBARU.

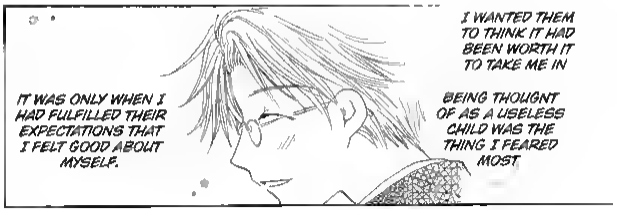
I WAS SAVED BY THE HERO-WORSHIP I FELT FOR HIM.

SUBARU WAS A SHIMMERING LIGHT IN THE DARK NIGHT SKY.
2-3 Tsuge
WATCH ME.
BECAUSE I'LL ALWAYS...
..BE RIGHT THERE BESIDE YOU.

PLEASE WAIT FOR ME.

Grades of each
2nd year Class 3 Hoshi
Tenta Natsu
Subject
K High General A
Sister M. School A
I Samurai A
S High School A
NOW THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT YOU'LL GET INTO K HIGH SCHOOL, NA-CHAN!
YOUR AUNT IS SO RELIEVED!
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
YOU'RE IN THE HIGHEST PERCENTILE IN THE NATION!
YOU'LL BE FINE!
NEXT YEAR, YOU AND SUBARU WILL ATTEND K HIGH SCHOOL TOGETHER!
I HAVEN'T BEEN ACCEPTED YET, REMEMBER?
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS!
OF COURSE..
...I WAS GLAD AUNT AND UNCLE WERE EXCITED ABOUT IT.
SUBARU...
BUT YOUR SCORE DROPPED SO POINTS SINCE MIDTERMS THAT'S NOT NORMAL.
OF COURSE NOT! I'VE JUST BEEN SLACKING A BIT.
NATSU?
DID YOU LOSE ON PURPOSE?
...AHEAD OF SUBARU.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT FOR ME.
IT JUST MAKES ME FEEL PATHETIC.
Subaru
Natsu
BUT!
CRUMPLE
IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME ANYWAY.
WHAT DOES IT MATTER?

NATSU.
I THINK I'LL MOVE INTO MY OWN ROOM FROM NOW ON.
I WANT TO CONCENTRATE MORE
AROUND THE TIME SUMMER ROLLED IN
I...DON'T HATE YOU, NATSU. I STILL LOVE YOU, BUT...
...I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU ANYMORE. WHENEVER I LOOK AT YOU...
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
...HE WANTED TO GET EVEN FURTHER AWAY.
SO FAR AWAY THAT HE COULD NEVER COME BACK.


IT WAS ONLY WHEN I HAD FULFILLED THEIR EXPECTATIONS THAT I FELT GOOD ABOUT MYSELF.
I WANTED THEM TO THINK IT HAD BEEN WORTH IT TO TAKE ME IN
BEING THOUGHT OF AS A USELESS CHILD WAS THE THING I FEARED MOST

OF COURSE YOU WON'T DISAPPOINT THEM!
AND BESIDES, YOU'VE STILL GOT TIME BEFORE--
I BET THEY WISH THAT YOU WERE THEIR REAL SON..
..INSTEAD OF A FAILURE LIKE ME
I DON'T THINK I'LL TRY FOR K HIGH.
IT'S HOPELESS AND I WOULDN'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT MOM AND DAD.
I'VE GOTTEN SOME B'S ON MY REPORT CARD, AND I KNOW I CAN'T PASS THE EXAMINATION

MUST BE AWFULLY NICE HAVIN' SOMEONE TO MAKE YOU BENTO LUNCHES, HUH, NATSU?
I GOT SOME OOLONG TEA, TOO!
EAT UP! EAT UP!
BEFORE BREAK'S OVER!
Here.
Here we go!
AND LET US HAVE SOME WHILE YOU'RE AT IT!
YEAH! SHOW US!
SO WHAT'D YOUR MOM MAKE FOR YOU TODAY?
HUH?
I'M SURE WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S ALREADY SMASHED TO BITS ..
NO WAY, GUYS
HA HA HA
WELL, YOU CAN HAVE SOME IF YOU REALLY WANT.
ぽこ POP カ!
WE HAD A LITTLE TUSSLE THIS MORNING AND--

カーン CLANG カーン
...I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING CRAZY.
THE CAFETERIA WAS PACKED!
YEAH
Full of first years!
Hey!
NATSU!
SORRY FOR THE WAIT!
FRESH

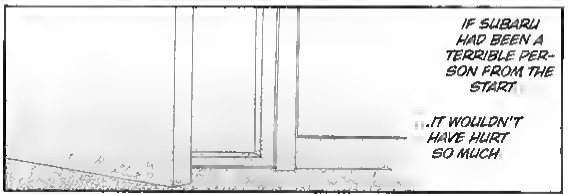
#9

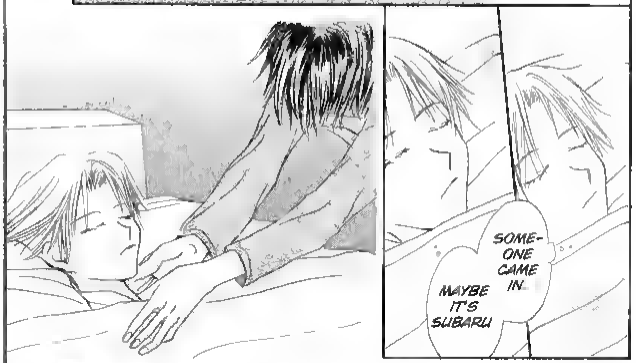
Natsu's Memories
(Part Two)

SUBARU! NA-CHAN!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE!
SUBARU.
YOU LOOK BETTER IN A BLAZER THAN YOU WOULD IN THIS OLD GAKURAN UNIFORM.
THAT SPRING
..I GOT ACCEPT-ED INTO K HIGH SCHOOL.

YOU KNOW. .
I'D BETTER START LEARNING HOW TO TIE MY OWN NECKTIES.
ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME BECAUSE I DIDN'T GET INTO K HIGH LIKE YOU?
HUH ...?
THE THINGS I HAD DONE IN THE PAST...
I WAS THE ONE BEING INSENSITIVE, BUT SUBARU'S OVER-POLITENESS HURT EVEN MORE
...SUBARU WAS DOING NOW.
SORRY.
IT WAS JUST A JOKE.
AND IT DIDN'T FEEL GOOD AT ALL.
...STANDING WHERE SUBARU HAD ONCE BEFORE
I WAS NOW.
Ha ha ha

crossroad Chapter 8: Natsu's Memories (Part 2)





Ninjas...Again

Now I wouldn't exactly call myself a Gamer, but I do own a PlayStation 2. For no reason at all, I bought the family set and had loads of fun with games like 'Xevious' and 'Tendaki Street' (a game that combines characters from DragonQuest and Final Fantasy) I really wanted to play 'Ninja Hattori-kun' so I borrowed it from Kise-san I think the original version is really amazing. For one, the player can die SO EASILY! Not only do you have no 'continues,' but you can't even SAVE the game, so once its over its over! I don't think the games in the family set make clearing the stage the goal. And I don't think machines are trying to kill humans like bugs. But playing 'Ninja Hattori-kun' made me really, really hate machines for the first time in my life. They are the enemy I will not forgive them. Chuckle chuckle... (4)

"I GOT A CALL FROM HIS SCHOOL EARLIER."
HUH?
I WAS JUST HEADING OUT.
NA-CHAN!
HAVE YOU SEEN SUBARU!?
IT WAS THE BEGINNING
OF A LONG, DRY SUMMER.
"AND WHEN I ASKED SUBARU ABOUT IT..."
"THEY SAID... SUBARU HASN'T BEEN ATTENDING HIS CLASSES."
"...HE LOOKED CONCERNED FOR A SECOND--AND THEN HE RAN OFF!"
SUBARU!

SQUEEZE
NATSU...
.....
HIS GENTLE VOICE AS USUAL
SLAM
"NATSU..."
THE TEARS WOULDN'T STOP.

...WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO WEAR THAT SCHOOL UNIFORM
I WAS THE ONE. .
clang
clang
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO REACH THEIR HIGHEST EXPECTATIONS
HUFF
SUBARU, GET BACK OVER HERE! THE TRAIN'S COMING!
I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO WEAR IT AND MAKE MOM AND DAD PROUD
clang
clang
SUBARU!
clang
clang
I'M SORRY ...
IF I CAN'T MAKE THEM HAPPY. .
I'M SORRY! I DON'T HATE YOU, NATSU. I STILL LOVE YOU, BUT..I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU ANYMORE. WHENEVER I LOOK AT YOU .
THE CROSSING GATE IS SO LOUD THAT—
...I CAN'T HEAR YOU
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF I'M STILL AROUND!?

SUBARU!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE!?
IT'S ALMOST DINNER TIME. COME ON, LET'S GO HOME
HUFF
clang
clang
clang
clang
clang
clang
AUNTIE'S WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU .
CLANG

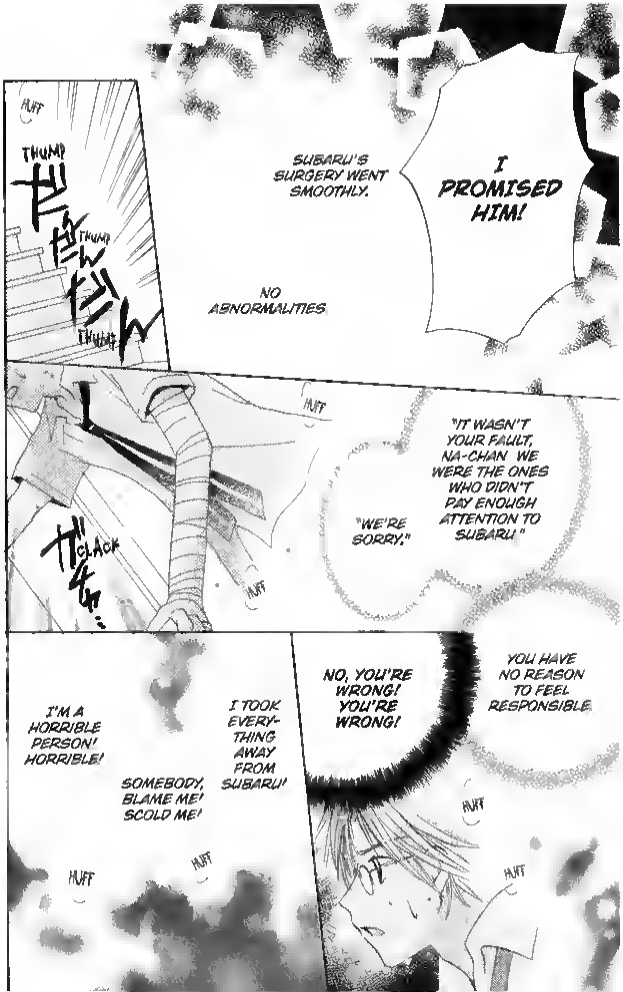
SUBARU MUST'VE COME HOME BY NOW
XX Hospital
Emerg
IN SURG
WHERE'S SUBARU!?
AUNTIE!
I DON'T EVEN...
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO
I REMEMBER HOW I GOT HOME THAT DAY.

HOOOOW
OH...
MY MIND HAD GONE COMPLETELY BLANK.
I SHOULD GO AFTER HIM.
WHEN I LIFTED MY HEAD AGAIN, I SAW SUBARU RUNNING IN THE DISTANCE
...I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING CRAZY!!

NATSU!!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING!?
THIS...
...IS SUBARU'S BLOOD
HUFF
HUFF
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
THIS IS SUBARU'S BLOOD.
HE GAVE IT TO ME, ANYWAY
HE CAN HAVE ALL OF IT.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
I PROMISED HIM THAT'D I'D TAKE HIS PLACE, IF HE EVER NEEDED...
SUBARU...
HE CAN HAVE MY LIFE IF HE NEEDS IT.

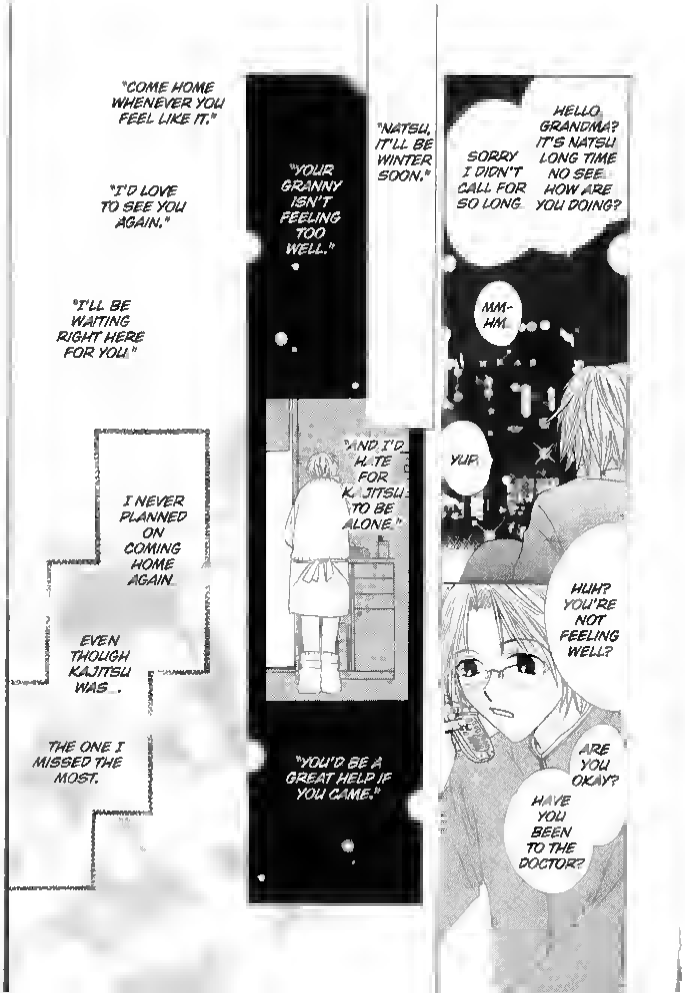
HUFF
...I'VE GOT SOME RIGHT HERE.
IF IT'S BLOOD HE NEEDS...
YOU MEAN...
...SUBARU DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH BLOOD?
CLATTER
HE WAS HIT BY A CAR AND HE'S BEEN BLEEDING SEVERELY.
APPARENTLY HE JUMPED RIGHT OUT INTO TRAFFIC.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
THIS IS SUBARU'S BLOOD.
IT'S LIKE HE WANTED TO BE HIT BY THAT CAR!

BUT WHAT DO I DO...
I FOUND IT.
SOME-BODY--!
AH
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HEH .
HA HA HA...
HA HA HA...
...ABOUT KAJITSU?
I hate you,
I hate you


HUFF
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
SUBARU'S SURGERY WENT SMOOTHLY.
NO ABNORMALITIES.
I PROMISED HIM!
HUFF
CLACK
"WE'RE SORRY."
"IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, NA-CHAN WE WERE THE ONES WHO DIDN'T PAY ENOUGH ATTENTION TO SUBARU."
I'M A HORRIBLE PERSON! HORRIBLE!
SOMEBODY, BLAME ME! SCOLD ME!
I TOOK EVERY-THING AWAY FROM SUBARU!
NO, YOU'RE WRONG! YOU'RE WRONG!
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO FEEL RESPONSIBLE.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

SUBARU QUIT HIS HIGH SCHOOL AND TRIED OUT AGAIN FOR K. HIGH.
IT WAS THE END OF AUTUMN.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S SO LATE.
WHERE SHOULD I GO NOW?
BOOKS DUE
11 mo. 5 DA
WE ARE NOW CLOSING.
SUBARU WOULD ALWAYS SHRINK AWAY WHENEVER HE SAW ME...
...SO I DID EVERYTHING I COULD TO AVOID HIM.
CLICK
I'M HOM--
HA HA HA
PLEASE, SUBARU! DON'T SAY SUCH WEIRD THINGS!
NO, BUT I'M SERIOUS!
GIVE ME A BREAK!
ALL RIGHT!
WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT!
ICHIRO HIT ANOTHER HOME RUN!

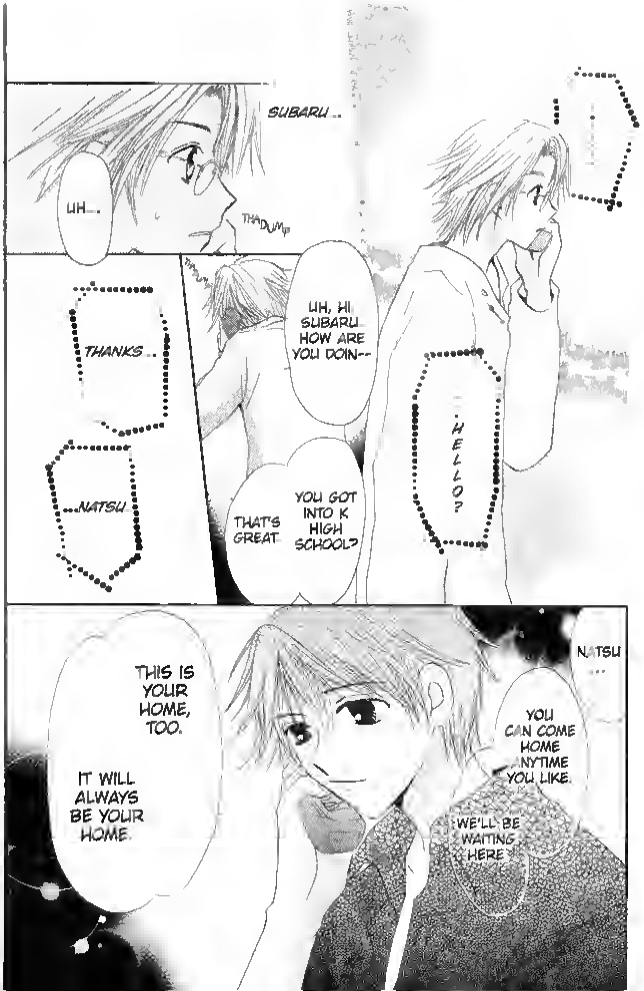
I WANTED TO BE LOVED MORE THAN ANYTHING!
I COULDN'T BEAR THE PAIN...
...OF BEING ALONE.
BY ANYONE...
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME MY LEFT ARM STARTED TO HURT.


"COME HOME WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT."
"I'D LOVE TO SEE YOU AGAIN."
"I'LL BE WAITING RIGHT HERE FOR YOU."
I NEVER PLANNED ON COMING HOME AGAIN.
EVEN THOUGH KAJITSU WAS...
THE ONE I MISSED THE MOST.
"YOUR GRANNY ISN'T FEELING TOO WELL."
"NATSU, IT'LL BE WINTER SOON."
"AND I'D HATE FOR KAJITSU TO BE ALONE."
"YOU'D BE A GREAT HELP IF YOU CAME."
HELLO, GRANDMA? IT'S NATSU. LONG TIME NO SEE. HOW ARE YOU DOING?
SORRY I DIDN'T CALL FOR SO LONG.
MM-HM.
YUP.
HUH? YOU'RE NOT FEELING WELL?
ARE YOU OKAY?
HAVE YOU BEEN TO THE DOCTOR?

WE'RE SORRY. THE NUMBER YOU HAVE REACHED IS NOT IN SERVICE.
I JUST WANTED EVERYONE TO BE HAPPY.
IF I WEREN'T AROUND, THIS HOUSE COULD GO ON HAPPILY.
click
...I CAN'T GET AHOLD OF TARO. AS USUAL...
I PLANNED ON HANGING UP RIGHT AWAY...
...IF KAJITSU PICKED UP.
BOY, IT'S COLD
I SHOULD'VE PUT A JACKET ON.

TRY TO ACT NATURAL
NATSU? THERE'S A CALL FOR YOU.
SOME LADY CALLED... T-TSUGE-SAN
R R R
NOTHIN'S THE MATTER. NOTHIN' AT ALL.
MAYBE THEY'RE ASKING HIM TO COME HOME AGAIN.
WONDER WHAT THAT'S ALL ABOUT.
FIRST A LETTER AND NOW A PHONE CALL?
WHAT? GO HOME!?
HUH? CANADA?
Err...
BUT I THOUGHT NATSU'S AUNT AND UNCLE MOVED TO CANADA ON BUSINESS.
At least, they were going to.

I DUNNO.
...LIFE'S GOTTEN SO TIRE-SOME.
AH HA HA HA!
I SEE.
EVERYONE FEELS PAIN
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
JUST THE SAME AS ME.


SUBARU..
UH...
THADUM
THANKS..
...NATSU
UH, HI. SUBARU. HOW ARE YOU DOIN--
HELLO?
THAT'S GREAT.
YOU GOT INTO K HIGH SCHOOL?
THIS IS YOUR HOME, TOO.
IT WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR HOME.
NATSU ...
YOU CAN COME HOME NYTIME YOU LIKE.
WE'LL BE WAITING HERE.

DID YOU FORGET THAT TAKAAKI-SAN WORKS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL? OF COURSE HE'D NEVER HAVE TO MOVE AWAY ON "BUSINESS."
COME ON, KAJITSU IT WAS JUST A JOKE!
HOW DENSE CAN YOU BE?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU BOUGHT SUCH A DUMB STORY
PAUSE
L--
AND WHY ARE YOU GETTING SO WORKED UP ABOUT THIS, ANYWAY?
JEEZ, WOULD YOU KEEP IT DOWN?
ALWAYS WORRYING YOURSELF OVER STUPID LITTLE THINGS.
YOU MEAN YOU TWO KNEW FROM THE START?
HOW COULD YOU REACT SO CALMLY IF YOU KNEW IT WAS A LIE?

HE SAYS HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU. I'LL SWITCH HIM OVER TO YOU NOW.
ABOUT SUBARU..
YES?
HUH?
LITTLE THINGS?
YOU THINK THIS IS LITTLE?
I GIVE UP..

I WONDER IF...

...I'LL REALLY EVER ..

DO YOUR BEST

.SEE THEM AGAIN

I'VE GOT FIVE PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF NOW
THEY NEED ME HERE
I DON'T THINK I CAN COME HOME FOR A WHILE
I'M DOING WELL
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY
THANK YOU I'D LIKE TO GO HOME, BUT
.. I CAN'T I'M SORRY
SUBARU.
I KNOW WE WENT THROUGH A LOT.
. BUT I'M ALL RIGHT NOW.
JUST HOW LONG DID HE SUFFER..
I STILL CONSIDER YOU MY VERY SPECIAL BROTHER
SO YOU CAN COME HOME ANY-TIME
. BEFORE HE WAS ABLE TO SAY THESE WORDS?

I LOVE YOU.
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
PONK
shiver
WHAT A WEIRD GUY
What's the matter with her?
HA HA HA
JUST THOUGHT I SHOULD SAY IT WHILE I CAN.
GIRLS SHOULDN'T SAY SUCH ROUGH THINGS.
NOW NOW, SATSUKI.
Yours not to pass after all.
HA HA HA
JUST WHAT IS RUMIKO TEACHING HER?
Not at he rate!
GIRLS SHOULD SAY "OH, YES!" AND "HERE IT COMES, BABY!"
RAWR!!
BI WAVE
TAKE THAT!
SWIPE

YO.
YUP
GOTCHA
WELL, I'M GONNA TAKE A BATH NOW.
ALL RIGHT
It's taken him long if the girls go first.
YOU FINISHED YOUR CALL?

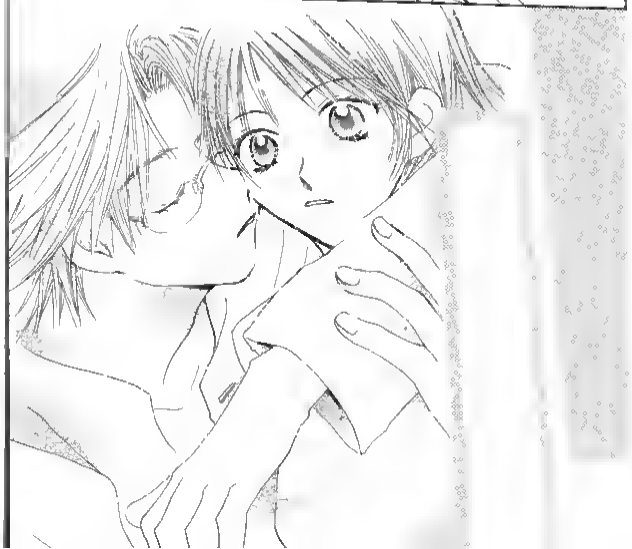
I LOVE YOU.

HM?
AND TARO?
I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS...
...FOR EVERY-THING.

MY NEW FRIEND, MANO-CHAN, SAYS SHE'S GOOD AT MAKING SWEETS
OH, JUST A BOOK ON SWEETS
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
YOU LIKE IT?
YOU'VE NEVER SAID SO BEFORE
I'M HAPPY WITH THE REGULAR OLD PUDDING YOU MAKE.
Teasing me again!
I GUESS MY COOKING'S OKAY, BUT
IT'S SORTA HUMILIATING, SO I THOUGHT I'D STUDY UP
I'M NOT VERY GOOD AT SWEETS
YOU REALLY LIKE YANKING MY CHAIN, NATSU!

RUB RUB
AND THANKS, SATSUKI
I LOVE YOU
?
SATSUKI
YOU WON'T HIT THE BALL IF YOU KEEP YOUR EYES CLOSED
OKAY ?
Oh, Okay
RUN-RUN ISN'T SURE WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "WHILE WE'RE AT IT", HM?
AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT, YOU TOO RUMIKO
MAYBE SOMETHING GREAT HAPPENED TO HIM OR MAYBE SOMETHING BAD. COULD BE EITHER.
BEATS ME!
HO HO HO
WHAT'S TH' MATTER WITH NA-CHAN?
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST..

HA HA HA!
LET'S WRITE LETTERS TO EACH OTHER AGAIN
NATSU'S ACTING SO CHILDISH ALL OF A SUDDEN!
WELL, OKAY. BUT THIS TIME, YOU HAVE TO PROMISE TO WRITE BACK!



SQUEEE!
HA HA HA HA! OKAY, OKAY! I WAS JUST KIDDING!
ACK!
You're choking me! I give up!
HUH...?
KICK
KICK
KICK
THIS IS...
THERE'S SOMETHING...
...ABOUT THIS
...DIFFERENT.
KAJITSU...

#10 Rhapsody of Youth

I THOUGHT...

I LOVE YOU.

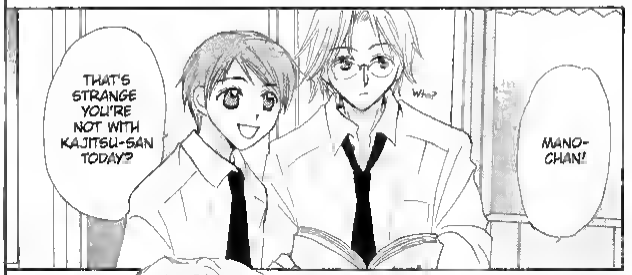
...MY HEART WOULD STOP.

crossroad Chapter 10: Rhapsody of Youth

Every time I publish a manga, I wind up talking about some trip I went on. But ever since I started Crossroad, I haven't traveled anywhere at all. I don't really have the energy...or time or money anyway. I used to know exactly who I planned to travel with, but lately all my friends are into "going on an adventure that doesn't take money!" I'm still thinking, "As long as it's got a roof, I can sleep there," but my friends are like, "Even if doesn't have a roof, it's not a problem!" I think they've got a survival spirit watching over them. Speaking of which, I changed the location of my office. Guess that counts as traveling, if only a little. Now I don't have to listen to those damn temple drums every morning -- and all the dead bodies are gone! Banzai!!

Nana Yazawa (5)

TODAY ...
NA-CHAN SAID THAT HE LOVED SATSUKI
NATSU, DO YOU MEAN...
"I LOVE YOU."
THUNK
IS SOMETHIN' WRONG WITH HIM? HE'S ACTING FUNNY
HE ALSO SAID IT TO TARO AND MAMA
AND NOT JUST SATSUKI
HE WHAT?


THAT'S STRANGE YOU'RE NOT WITH KAJITSU-SAN TODAY?
What?
MANO-CHAN!

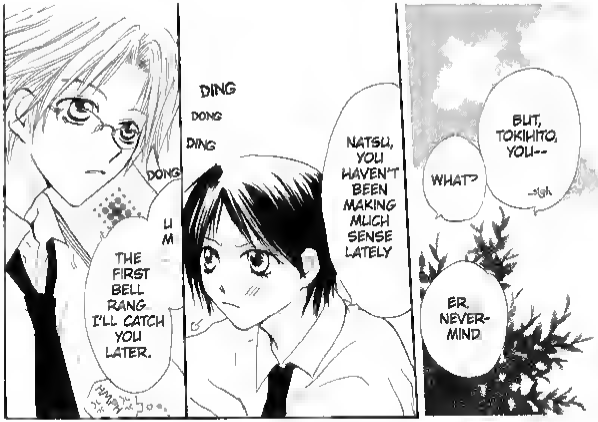
I HAVEN'T SEEN KAJITSU SINCE THIS MORNING, EITHER
?
SHE WAS HERE JUST A MINUTE AGO
HUH?
THAT'S FUNNY...
SHE PUT OUT OUR BREAKFAST AND LUNCH AND LEFT WITHOUT SAYING A WORD
Here she is.
Oh?
YOU LOOK A LIKE A NINJA, HIDING LIKE THAT.
...NINJA?

YOU'VE BEEN YAWNING ALL DAY LONG
YOU'RE ACTING FUNNY TODAY, KAJITSU
BECAUSE I'M TIRED!
Not so fast.
MANO-CHAN! I CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER!
I'M GOING HOME TO SLEEP SEE YA!

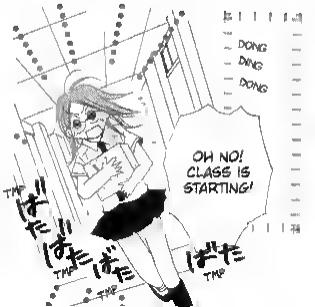
OH, KAJITSU-CHAN! LOOK!
IT'S TOKIHITO-KUN!
N-NO REASON AT ALL! NO ONE SAID THAT THEY LOVED ME! NO! THAT WAS ALL JUST A DREAM!
AND...
...YOUR LITTLE BROTHER'S WITH HIM!
What's his name? Natsu?
FREEZE
IS THERE SOME REASON WHY YOU DIDN'T GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP?
GULP

REALLY?
ACTUALLY, I BROUGHT SOME WITH ME TODAY!
IT'S PEACH?
I LOVE PEACHES!
REALLY?
Peel
I'LL GO GET IT NOW!
I LEFT IT IN THE REFRIGERATOR IN THE CLUB ROOM.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY SOME, TOKIHITO-KUN?
THEY BOTH TOOK THE SAME ELECTIVE CALLIGRAPHY CLASS
SINCE LAST SEMESTER
Classes 1 through 3 were put together.
Huh? Right, now? Why not until lunch?
No! I'll get it right away!
HAVE THEY KNOWN EACH OTHER LONG?
WHAT A ROMANTIC SCENE!
Hmm...
Wow!
THAT GIRL SURE LIKES TOKIHITO-KUN A LOT

Loom
W.A.A.H!!
He naughty kid
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
KAJITSU
THERE'S SOMETHING...
...I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
HUH...?


DING
DONG
DING
DONG
UM
THE FIRST BELL RANG. I'LL CATCH YOU LATER.
NATSU, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN MAKING MUCH SENSE LATELY
BUT, TOKIHITO, YOU--
WHAT?
ER, NEVER-MIND

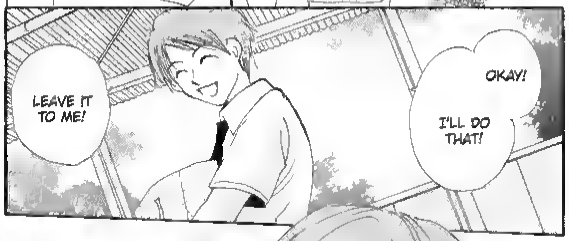
YOU GO ON AHEAD.
I'M GOING TO WAIT FOR MANO-CHAN
OH!
C'MON, TOKI-HITO
LET'S GET GOING


DONG
DING
DONG
OH NO! CLASS IS STARTING!
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP

OKAY. NO PROB-LEM
SORRY
TOKIHITO-KUN! I STILL HAVE TO PASS OUT SOME PAPERS, SO I GOTTA GO.
It's my duty

I'M SO STUPID!
EVEN IF I'D GOTTEN IT TO HIM BEFORE THE BELL, HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TIME TO EAT IT!
I'M SO STUPID! THERE WASN'T MUCH TIME UNTIL CLASS!
AND NOW HE'S PROBABLY ANNOYED BECAUSE I MADE HIM WAIT SO LONG!
OF COURSE...
MANO-CHAN! MANO-CHAN!
HE WOULDN'T WAIT.
AND I MADE KAJITSU-CHAN TAKE CARE OF ALL THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS DUTIES!

SEE YOU LATER!
OH!
UH, TOKI-HITO-KUN?
HEY, YOU TWO! ARE YOU STILL THERE? GET TO CLASS ALREADY!
IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TROUBLE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF IT!
YES, SIR!


LEAVE IT TO ME!
OKAY!
I'LL DO THAT!

I DID IT!

I'M SORRY FOR MAKING THINGS DIFFICULT FOR YOU!
I WASN'T THINKING!
TOKIHITO-KUN! I'M SO SORRY!

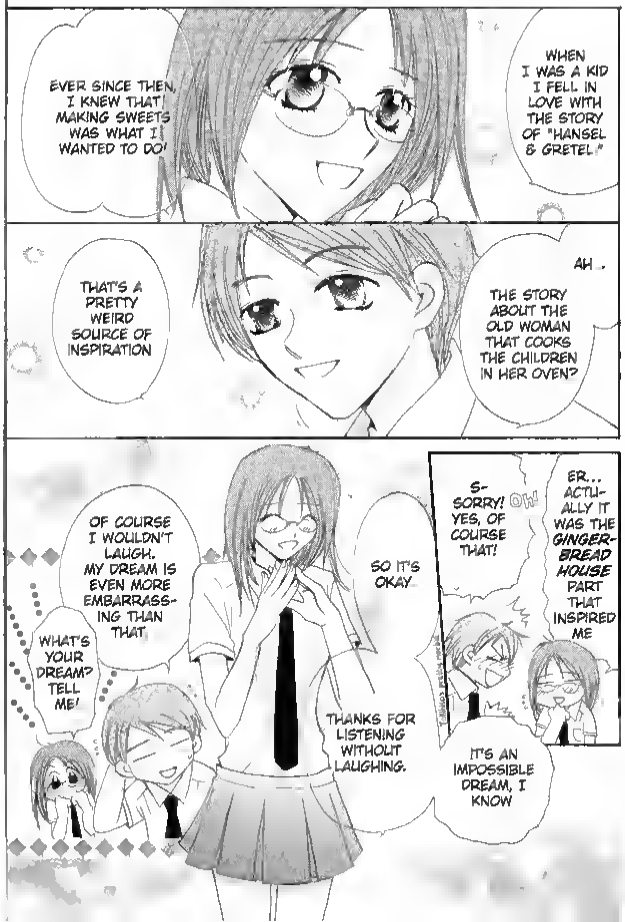
Hmm?
OVER HEEYR!
I HAD TO HIDE BECAUSE SOME TEACHER JUST YELLED AT ME TO GET TO CLASS!

GOOD GIRL
GOOD GIRL

HEH, HEH!
I SIT IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM, SO I'LL HAVE NO TROUBLE SNEAKING IN A BITE!
I WAS JUST STARTING TO GET HUNGRY.

chatter
WHAT'S THAT SWEET SMELL?
WHO DARES EAT DURING MY CLASS --!?
WHOA!!
CLATTER
HM?
chatter
chatter
STOMP STOMP
HEE HEE! I HAD TO SKIP BREAKFAST THIS MORNING THANK GOODNESS I'VE GOT THIS TO SNACK ON!
POP
!!!
WHEN SHE SAID A PEACH SWEET, I WAS EXPECTING A TART OR A PIECE OF CAKE
Just where is the peach in this thing?
IS IT... A WORK OF ART!?
What the hell is it?

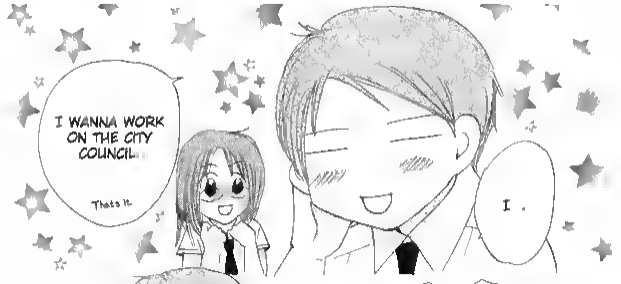
AND THAT'S WHY..
...IF YOU DO THIS, AND THEN--
ER...
I DID IT! I DID IT!
I DID IT!


EVER SINCE THEN, I KNEW THAT MAKING SWEETS WAS WHAT I WANTED TO DO!
WHEN I WAS A KID I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE STORY OF "HANSEL & GRETEL."
THAT'S A PRETTY WEIRD SOURCE OF INSPIRATION
AH..
THE STORY ABOUT THE OLD WOMAN THAT COOKS THE CHILDREN IN HER OVEN?
OF COURSE I WOULDN'T LAUGH. MY DREAM IS EVEN MORE EMBARRASSING THAN THAT.
WHAT'S YOUR DREAM? TELL ME!
SO IT'S OKAY
THANKS FOR LISTENING WITHOUT LAUGHING.
S-SORRY! YES, OF COURSE THAT!
ER... ACTUALLY IT WAS THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE PART THAT INSPIRED ME
IT'S AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, I KNOW

2-3
DID YOU END UP GIVING IT TO HIM?
YUP!
IT'S NO PROBLEM!
BOW... BOW BOW
I'M SORRY!
I'M SORRY!
AFTER ALL, MANO-CHAN... YOUR SWEETS ARE REALLY PROFESSIONAL!
TOKIHITO-KUN'S ENJOYING IT RIGHT NOW!
I'M SURE..
It was delicious!
OH, I GET IT.
YOU WANT TO BE A PROFESSIONAL SWEETS CHEF?
THAT'S RIGHT
B-BUT IT'S JUST A SILLY DREAM
And everyone happily ate it!
THIS IS REALLY DELICIOUS!
WOW!
Class got a little off-track

MM-HM
AND ...WHEN HE TOLD ME THAT I SHOULD GO FOR IT...
...TOKIHITO-KUN TOLD ME THAT HE HAD A DREAM, TOO!
I'D GIVEN UP ON THE IDEA, BUT.
...I SUDDENLY GOT THE COURAGE!
I-I-I'M NOT THAT GOOD! NOT AT ALL!
Kyaaa!
Tee hee hee!
I LOVE YOUR SWEETS, MANO-CHAN
I THINK THAT'S GREAT!

UM...
AND TOKIHITO-KUN, TOO
I TOTALLY SUPPORT YOU.
I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH DATING, SO I REALLY WON'T KNOW HOW TO... HELP YOU.
I THINK YOU TWO REALLY MAKE A GOOD MATCH!
HUH?

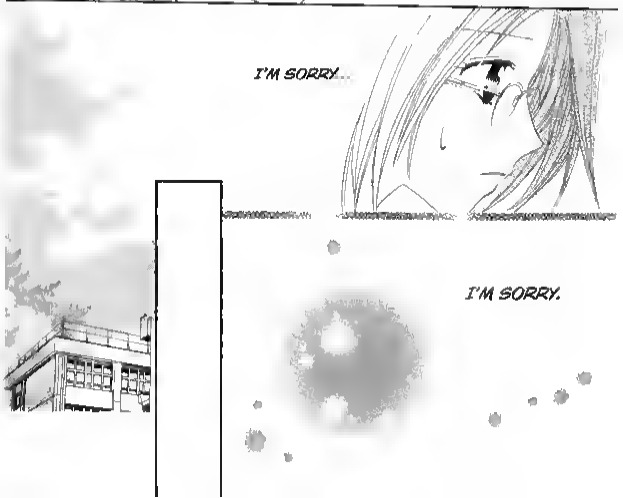

I WANNA WORK ON THE CITY COUNCIL.
That's it.
I.

OKAY, MANO-CHAN!
LET'S BOTH DO OUR BEST!
OH! I WOULDN'T EXPECT ANYTHING LESS FROM A FEUDAL LORD! MAGNIFICENT!

KAJITSU-CHAN I THINK I'M REALLY GOING TO APPLY TO A GOURMET COOKING ACADEMY.
RIGHT!

OH! YOU'RE ON THE CHEERLEADING SQUAD? WHAT ABOUT THE SWEETS CLUB?
NAH... SWEETS ARE JUST MY HOBBY
YOU'RE ALREADY HEADED HOME, TOKIHITO-KUN?
You look great!
MANO-CHAN!
YUP
BUT I WAS WONDERING. DO YOU KNOW IF KAJITSU-SAN'S ALREADY GONE HOME?
UH... SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING TO TALK TO NATSU ABOUT
SO I THINK SHE WENT STRAIGHT HOME.
OH I SEE

AFTER ALL
KAJITSU-CHAN'S THE ONE HE--
O-OH. OKAY.
YEAH.
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL!
YOU THINK TOO MUCH, KAJITSU-CHAN!
TOKIHITO-KUN'S JUST A GOOD FRIEND! THAT'S ALL!
THIS IS PRETTY HARD SORRY.
NO, NO!


I'M SORRY...
I'M SORRY.

TOKIHITO-KUN!
T--

SEE YOU TOMORROW!
TMP
W...
...AIT...
THANKS, MANO-CHAN!
HAVE FUN AT YOUR CLUB!
REALLY?
BUT...
SHE JUST LEFT. I'M SURE YOU CAN CATCH HER IF YOU GO NOW.

YEAH. IT'S AT A CONVENIENCE STORE, SO IT STARTS AFTER SCHOOL AND ENDS LATE AT NIGHT.
IT'S ALREADY SET UP.
HUH?
YOU'RE GETTING A PART-TIME JOB?
MANO.
...CHAN?
YEAH WHAT'S WRONG?
ERK!
THAT'S ALL YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
I DON'T PLAN ON GOING ON TO A CRAM SCHOOL..
BUT I DO WANT TO TAKE A MOCK EXAM SO I'LL NEED THE MONEY
NOTHING'S WRONG!

.....

I'M GLAD, BUT...
HM..
I GUESS IT'S BE-CAUSE..
OH, AND KEEP THE PART-TIME JOB THING A SECRET FROM TARO, WOULD YOU?
HE'LL PUSH HIS FASCISM ON ME IN A SECOND.
You're going to graduate from a good college, and that's that!
You will be nothing but trash!
NO PROBLEM. BUT...WHY DID YOU TELL THIS TO ME?
BOY, EVERYONE HAS THESE AMAZING PLANS FOR THE FUTURE...
...AND ALL I EVER THINK ABOUT IS HOUSEWORK AND MY SIBLINGS
...I CAN TRUST YOU.
HUH?

NATSU...
ARE YOU REALLY GONNA GO TO THE TOKYO UNIVERSITY?
BLUSH
AND UNTIL I SAVE UP ENOUGH..
I DON'T WANT TO RELY ON OUR OLDER BROTHER FOR ANYTHING
IT'S TRUE! SMART PEOPLE ARE LIKE ANOTHER SPECIES!
Blunt
IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH
Of course.
WHOOOOOA!
PLEASE PUT IT IN A LANGUAGE I CAN UNDER-STAND!
I'VE BEEN EYEING VARIOUS PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. BUT TOKYO U IS A BEHEMOTH COMPARED TO OTHERS OF ITS ILK SO IT WOULD BE MUCH EASIER FOR ONE SUCH AS ME TO ASSIMILATE.
WHETHER IT'S TOKYO UNIVERSITY OR ANOTHER ESTABLISHMENT, I DON'T WANT TO END UP IN A PLACE WHERE I STAND OUT
Easy
Is that so?
CHICKS DIG GUYS FROM TOKYO U.
AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE, TOKYO U IS JUST PLAIN COOL
SINKING

HELLO THERE.
..TODA-SAN.
..I'D BE ABLE TO FLY OFF INTO NEW HEIGHTS.

I NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO LOOK THROUGH THEM.
OH! THESE ARE THE CLUB DESCRIP-TIONS FOR INCOMING STUDENTS

IF ONLY..
IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU
SENSEI
.. SOMEONE WOULD GIVE ME A LITTLE PUSH FROM BEHIND..

I ALSO..
.. WANT TO FIND SOMETHING TO LOVE..
I'm sorry

I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
JUST LIKE HOW I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT NATSU ALL DAY TODAY, AND COULDN'T SLEEP LAST NIGHT
MY WORLD IS GETTING WAY TOO SMALL

.. LIKE MANO-CHAN.

YEAH.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
POKK
HEY!
TODA-SAN
ARE YOU FREE TONIGHT?
WHY DON'T YOU COME OVER TO MY PLACE?

I'LL TRY ANYTHING.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS, SENSEI?
...OR SOME-THING.
OR MAYBE A PART-TIME JOB'..
I HAVEN'T JOINED ANYTHING. MAYBE I SHOULD
...SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE ME BURN WITH PASSION
BUT I REALLY WANT
FLIP
FLIP

.....

#11

The Greatest Love in the World

crossroad Chapter II The Greatest Love in the World

THIS IS SO UNFAIR.
SO THIS IS WHAT HE MEANT BY "HIS" PLACE...
BUT I WOUND UP...
...TAKING UP AN APPRENTICE-SHIP FOR HIS CALLIGRAPHY CLUB!
TODA-SAN!
YES
TODA-SAN! REFILL THE BRUSH-WASHING WATER!
YES MA'AM !!
OKAY!
TODA-SAN! WIPE THAT INK OFF THE FLOOR!

Compared to the really popular manga creators, I don't get that much fan mail, but when letters do come, they're always very nice, telling me to keep doing my best. Thank you very much for those! In volume one, I wrote that this might be the last series I'd ever do, which may have caused some of you to worry -- but really, I intend to keep writing passionately every day. It's just that sometimes I think I shouldn't write such weird things anymore. Sorry if I made you worry. But thanks for caring! You know, when I have time to respond to my fanmail I don't know what to write besides a polite reply. I finally updated my webpage a bit, so there's some new information you can check out. Also, I've had my flyers sent to book stores all over Japan, and I'm in Pop magazine. There's information on that too on the website. Be sure to check in at least seven times a month!

6 The Last Space!

Kajitsus imagination goes this far...
...HE WOULD BRING ME INTO AN ADULT WORLD...
What's wrong? Don't be scared.
"WHY DON'T YOU COME OVER TO MY PLACE?"
I THOUGHT THAT BECAUSE SENSEI'S AN ADULT...
...THAT I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT.
TMP
TMP
TMP
YES, MA'AM! I'M SORRY!
TODA-SAN! GET OVER HERE!
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU GET TO REPLENISH THE STOCK OF PAPER!
Join the Calligraphy Club!

CALFS
CAL WAX
FED UP
AND HERE I THOUGHT I'D FIND A HOT BABE WASHING DUST RAGS
...BUT IT'S JUST TODA-SAN
HERE, TAKE THIS
How you holdin' up?
THAT'S IT?
I thought they were serious!
THAT WAS A ROOKIE TEST?
flap flap flap
YOU DID SAY YOU WERE INTERESTED IN FINDING A CLUB TO JOIN
IT HELPS KEEP THE MEMBERSHIP AT A REASONABLE SIZE
SO WE USE THIS TEST TO THIN OUT THE NUMBERS
WE GET A LOT OF APPLICANTS WHO ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN ME
Wow, how shameless.

GET TO IT!
CLEAN THEM ALL BY THE END OF THE DAY!
DIZZY...
slide
stench
もぞ...
SCRUB
REAL DEMONS..
So evil...
THEY'RE DEMONS
Aaaaaugh!
WHAT THE HECK AM I DOING!?
WAIT A SEC ...
Uh..?
I'M GETTING CARRIED AWAY! MUST...KEEP IT TOGETHER!
WHY AM I WORKING SO HARD FOR THESE JERKS!?

AFTER ALL, YOU ARE AN ADULT!
THE TOP FLOOR OF A HOTEL OR SOMETHING WOULD BE SO AMAZING!
Sheesh
IF THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE YOU'D RATHER BE DOING
...THEN JUST SAY IT STRAIGHT OUT
HOW ABOUT WE GO TO A RESTAURANT WHERE WE HAVE A NICE VIEW OF THE CITY'S NIGHT LIFE?
ALL RIGHT, SENSE!!
Suddenly enters up-maid-mode
TEE HEE!
THIS IS GONNA BE FUN!
The speaker of unreal
HE SEEMS UPSET!
ALL RIGHT IT'S A DEAL
WE WOULD DINE ON ITALIAN CUISINE AS WE ENJOY A PANORAMA VIEW OF THE CITY AT NIGHT! OOH! JUST GORGEOUS!
HOW'S SATURDAY NIGHT SOUND?
HUH...?

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SEE ME THREE TIMES A WEEK! THINK ABOUT IT!
YEAH, BUT I REALLY DON'T CARE MUCH ABOUT CALLIGRAPHY, SO I DON'T CARE IF I DON'T GET IN--

*1000 YEN = ABOUT $10

TAKE THIS 1000 YEN AND GO GET SOMETHING YOU LIKE.
SURE
REALLY!?
I could eat a horse!
DON'T SAY THINGS THAT COULD BE TAKEN THE WRONG WAY
WOMEN ARE JUST TOOLS TO YOU, AREN'T THEY SENSEI?
HUH...?

TH-THIS IS CRAZY!!
I'M GOING ON A DATE...
OH MY GOD!
THIS WILL BE...
...OUR LITTLE SECRET.
OH...
...WITH MY TEACHER!!!

I'LL COME BY TO PICK YOU UP.
I WAS JUST JOKING, BUT NOW...
OKAY.
NO WAY...
ER, IT'S JUST..
..WELL, OKAY
THEN WE SHOULD MEET SOMEWHERE ELSE?
N-NO WAY! THAT'S--

TH-THAT'S WHAT YOUNG BOYS ARE DOING THESE DAYS?
A BOY FROM ANOTHER CLASS GAVE THEM TO ME!
AND THESE TOO!
THANKS. I GOT THEM FROM A BOY IN CLASS
HEY, SATSUKI THOSE PONY-TAIL HOLDERS ARE SO CUTE ON YOU!
STOP! DON'T BE TAKEN IN BY MEN'S CHEAP ACCESSORIES!
And don't follow old ladies home!
Or take candy from strangers!
Everyone is so nice!
HUH ...?
MUNCH MUNCH
A bribe?
BUT MAMA SAID...

Privileges of a Pretty Girl

NATSU AND TARO ARE ALSO COMING HOME LATE TONIGHT...
...AND THAT APPRENTICE THING SURE WORE ME OUT.
TONIGHT'S DINNER IS INSTANT CURRY!
And that's why...
POOF
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH

Beeep
GOOD-NIGHT, MY SWEET CHILDREN! I LOVE EVERYONE FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!
THIS IS RUN-RUN! I'M GOING OUT TO KARAOKE WITH SOME BUDDIES FROM ENGLISH CLASS TILL MORNING! MAKE SURE TO LOCK ALL THE DOORS AND SLEEP WELL!
Click

JEEZ, LOOK AT THE TIME!
Talk about useless!
MOM GOT A JOB TEACHING AT A LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION SCHOOL.
I THOUGHT IT'D STRAIGHTEN HER OUT, BUT NOW IT'S TURNED TO THIS IN NO TIME!
Now that I think about it, she probably knows so many different languages because she's had so many men from all over the world!

I SAW MORE OF HIM LIKE THIS AS A KID.
Wow. His eyesights pretty bad.
NOW THAT HE'S GROWN UP.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN NATSU SO CLOSE
SPEAKING OF WHICH..
ZZZZ..
AW..
THIS IS NO GOOD
I'M GOING TO PUT THE RAIN SHUTTERS UP, OKAY?
RATTLE RATTLE
ZZZ

I'M HOME...
RATTLE
I'M TIRED
SWAY
HUH?
DID YOU ALREADY EAT? I MADE CURRY!
So, how was it?
WELCOME HOME! CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR FIRST DAY ON THE JOB!
wobble wobble
stumble stumble
NATSU ?
Hellooo?
NA

STARE
He's gonna be pissed!
OOPS!
Oh no..
MMM
GOOD-NIGHT..
ZZZ .
US SIBLINGS SHOULD NEVER BE APART I DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE MOM AND DAD
I WANT TO BE WITH NATSU. FOREVER AND EVER
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

THE ONE I LOVE MOST
NATSU REALLY IS ..
HEE HEE
So cute.
I STILL LOVE NATSU MORE THAN ANYONE, BUT ..
WHEN I WAS A KID, I REALLY USED TO THINK I'D BECOME HIS WIFE
I'LL HAVE TO DO MY BEST.
IF I LOVE SOMEONE ELSE ..
.. MY LITTLE BROTHER
NATSU IS...
..THEN HE WON'T BE NUMBER ONE ANY-MORE
SO I CAN'T HAVE HIM AS MY NUMBER ONE

YESTERDAY
I JUST FELT LIKE .
...I WAS READY TO TELL HIM
YUP.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID THAT, MANO-CHAN!
YOU TOLD TOKIHITO-KUN THAT YOU LIKE HIM?
THAT'S GREAT!
BUT HE REJECTED ME FLAT-OUT.
It's an adult!
It's an adult!
WHOA! YOU'RE NOT THE MANO-CHAN I KNOW!
HE APOLOGIZED AND SAID HE DIDN'T SEE ME AS ANYTHING MORE THAN JUST A FRIEND.

Yell
Yell
Whew!?
YOU CALLING ME A PERVERT!?
OF COURSE NOT!
THEN I DON'T EITHER!
LIKE YOU'RE ONE TO TALK, TARO! YOU WATCH SATSUKI WHILE SHE'S SLEEPING, TOO! UNLESS YOU HAVE SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE! HUH?
MELT
Aww, all of the guys hard work just melts away...
ARE YOU GUYS GETTIN' ALL LOVEY-DOVEY AGAIN!?
Knock it off!
I WAS JUST WATCHING HIM SLEEP! IS THAT A CRIME?
WHAT GIVES!?
Great! Now she's got me all upset!
What the hell?
Am I doing something wrong?
HMPH!
And don't mumble at me!
I DON'T CARE IF YOU GUYS AREN'T TIED BY BLOOD!
Owie!
Nooo!
GOOD BOY, GOOD BOY
I'm sleepy.
OKAY, OKAY.
I'LL PAT YOUR HEAD, TOO
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
Naruu just fell asleep.
TARO LECTURED US FOR AN HOUR THAT NIGHT.
All right, already! I get it!
DON'T YOU DARE FORGET THAT YOU'RE STILL BROTHER AND SISTER!

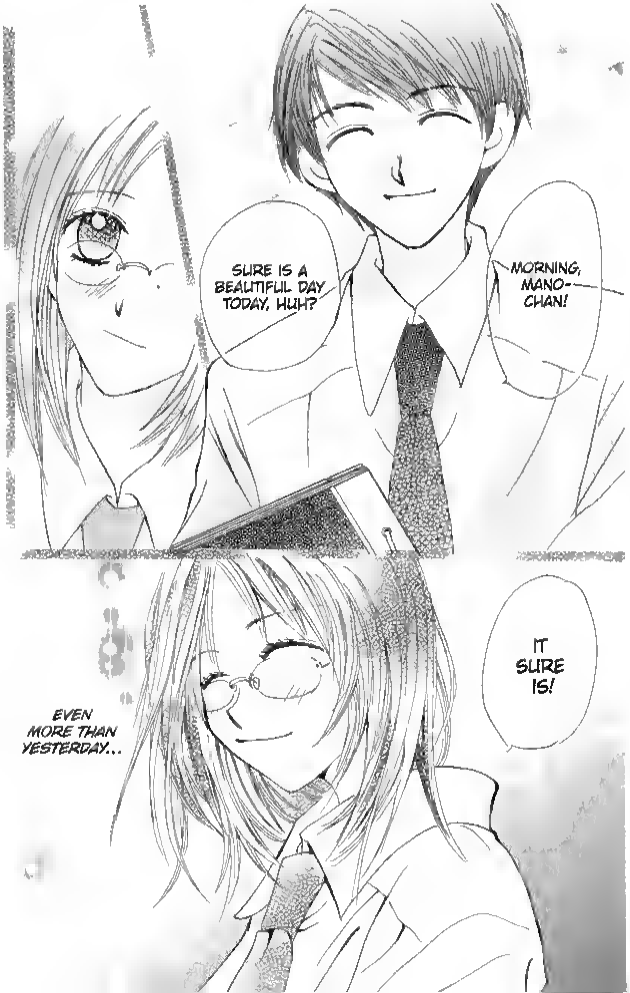
...I LIKE TOKIHITO-KUN EVEN MORE THAN I USED TO!
AND NOW
I'M NOT GOING TO..
GIVE UP JUST YET
IT'S ONLY JUST BEGUN

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT?
HE CAME BY MY HOUSE LATER THAT NIGHT!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, THOUGH I KNEW IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FROM THE START
ALL THAT WAY JUST TO APOLOGIZE AGAIN..
HE DIDN'T HAVE TO GO OUT OF HIS WAY LIKE THAT FOR A GIRL HE DOESN'T EVEN LIKE
.WHEN HE TALKED TO ME
HE TURNED BRIGHT RED AND LOOKED NERVOUS ..
..TO TELL HIM SO
..BUT I JUST FELT GLAD THAT I LIKED HIM AND HAD THE COURAGE .
HE MAY HAVE REJECTED ME ..

TOKI-HITO-KUN..
B-BECAUSE, MANO-CHAN...
WH-WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
Y-YOU'RE SO CUTE...
THAT YOU J-JUST..
...MAKE ME CRY!
HEY THERE, KAJITSU-SAN! MANO-CHAN!
GOOD MORNING!

I'M SURE THAT SOME DAY HE'LL COME TO ME AGAIN
AND WHEN THAT DAY COMES...
...PLEASE SUPPORT ME KAJITSU-CHAN
OF COURSE I WILL!
I WILL SUPPORT YOU NO MATTER WHAT!
TEARS OF LOVE
GO FOR IT, MANO-CHAN!

OH, MANO-CHAN!
YOU'RE SO AMAZING!
NOW I WANT TO BE IN LOVE EVEN MORE THAN EVER!
HOW COOL! HOW COOL!
ENVIOUS
STOMP STOMP
BECAUSE TODAY...
I LIKE TOKIHITO-KUN EVEN MORE!
TOOT
Nose Puffs
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
I HAVE TO FORGET ABOUT NATSU!
NO!
NO!
NO!
THAT'S RIGHT! THIS IS NO TIME TO BE THINKING OF MY LITTLE BROTHER AS NUMBER ONE!


MORNING, MANO-CHAN!
SURE IS A BEAUTIFUL DAY TODAY, HUH?
IT SURE IS!
EVEN MORE THAN YESTERDAY...

NOW I'M GOING TO TELL IT TO YOU STRAIGHT, THAT I DID NOT MEAN THAT I WANTED TO LOVE YOU!
GASP
WAIT A MINUTE!
WELL, YEAH BUT STILL... OUCH
I MEAN, WE ARE SIBLINGS.
WELL, I SHOULD HOPE NOT.
BLUNTER
He's completely crossed me off.
That's not surprising, but...
HEY! NUMBER ONE! ♡
I'M RUINED!
OH MY GOD! I JUST SAID THE ABSOLUTE WORST THING POSSIBLE!

I HAVE NO HONOR
PLEASE STOP DOING THINGS THAT WILL BRING SHAME TO THE FAMILY!
NATSU!
HEY.
GRAB
SORRY, I JUST GOT A LITTLE EXCITED
THAT'S ALL.
YOU'RE ACTING VERY SUSPICIOUS

OH NO!! I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
JUST SOMETHING ABOUT WANTING TO BE IN LOVE MORE THAN EVER
BLUNT
DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?

WOULD YOU MIND..
..STOPPING THAT?
IT MAKES ME UNCOM-FORTABLE.
THAT YOUR BOY-FRIEND?
N-NO! HE'S MY LITTLE BROTHER!
SENSEI, YOU WERE STARTING TO GO TOO FAR!
AH-HA!
Ow!

NUMBER ONE-CHAN I WAS TRYING TO THINK, OF SOMETHING...
...BUT THEN I SAW YOU WITH ONE OF YOUR BUTTONS UNDONE AND YOUR TIE ALL LOOSE. .
NUMBER ONE?
THAT'S THE NEW HOME EC TEACHER
It's a long story...
Yo!
LONG TIME, NO SEE HOW'S IT HANGIN'?
TOMA-SENSEI!
DON'T MOVE LET ME FIX THAT FOR YOU.
HUH?
IT'S SIMPLY TOO CUTE.
SLIP
YANK
HUH?

ARE YOU SURE IT'S SUCH A GOOD IDEA TO FOOL AROUND WITH HER?
AND YOU EVEN BORROWED SOME OF RUN-RUN'S CLOTHES!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN?
PUTTING ON MAKE-UP...
What fun!
"CLOSE YOUR MOUTH AND OPEN YOUR EYES AND EARS."
THERE WAS A LINE FROM A MOVIE A LONG TIME AGO.
SO? WHAT OF IT?
Tee hee!
I SEE THE WOMAN INSIDE OF YOU HAS FINALLY AWAKENED!
Oh!

SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING KINKY GOIN' ON BETWEEN HER AND THE BRO.
LOVE OR LUST OR SOMETHING
YUP
HE'S A PRETTY GOOD KID.
DID YOU FIND THE ENCOUNTER ENLIGHTENING?
A COUPLE MINUTES AGO I RAN INTO NUMBER ONE'S LITTLE BROTHER.
Ooh, it's leaving a mark.
SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO REALIZE IT YET, THOUGH.
AKAI...

Bonus Comic 3: A Family Of Love

Plus Postscript

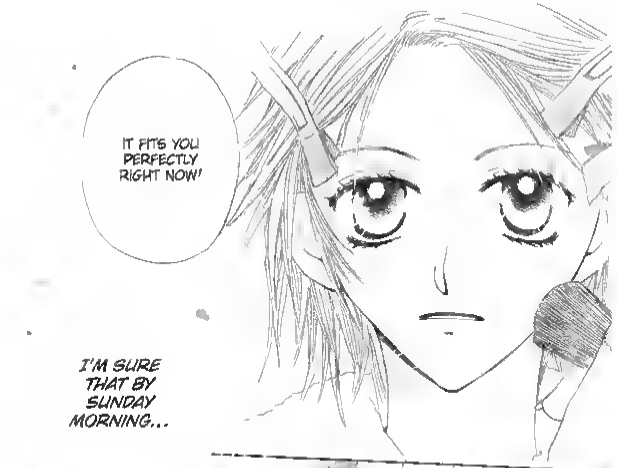
Shioko Summary — October 2003

Thank you so much for reading until the very end! In Vol. 1, I said I was finished with half the plot, but now I'm not sure what's going to happen in the next chapter...though I do have the ending already figured out.

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me greatly. Kise-san, Sen-chan, Imuzo, Yamamoto-san, Miho-chan, and Ayu-chan. Also to Yamazaki-san, and my dear editor who saw me through the whole way. And last but not least, my readers! Thank you all so much!

Until next time!

Shioko Mizuki



Translator's Notes

Pg. 11
Yaki-Imo—*Yaki-Imo*, or baked sweet potatoes, are a fall and winter comfort food. Sold from street carts or roaming trucks (like the one Tokihito-kun works in) the sweet potatoes are baked fresh in wood-fired ovens with long chimneys. Vendors play a Yaki-Imo song to attract customers, much like ice cream trucks in America.

Pg. 37
School terms – In Japanese high schools, the year is broken into three terms. School begins around April 1st, so now that Spring is here, a new school year begins! As second year students, Kajitsu and friends are entering the equivalent of 11th grade.

Pg. 38
The line, "What's that 'I got caught shoplifting in the Valley of the Hippos' look?" refers to the setting for a classic Japanese anime about the Muumin of Muumin Valley, which are creatures that look like hippos (just as Kajitsu's face does in the panel).

Pg. 74
Bento — *Bento*, or boxed lunches, are a traditional Japanese style of meal in which an assortment of foods are arranged in compartmentalized boxes. Often, *bento* presentations can be quite beautiful, featuring a variety of colors and textures and aesthetic flourishes. The boxes that Kajitsu prepares are the type that a doting mother might make for a child, with hot dogs cut to look like octopi and fish cake, *konnyaku* (starch cake) and veggies shaped into stars and hearts.

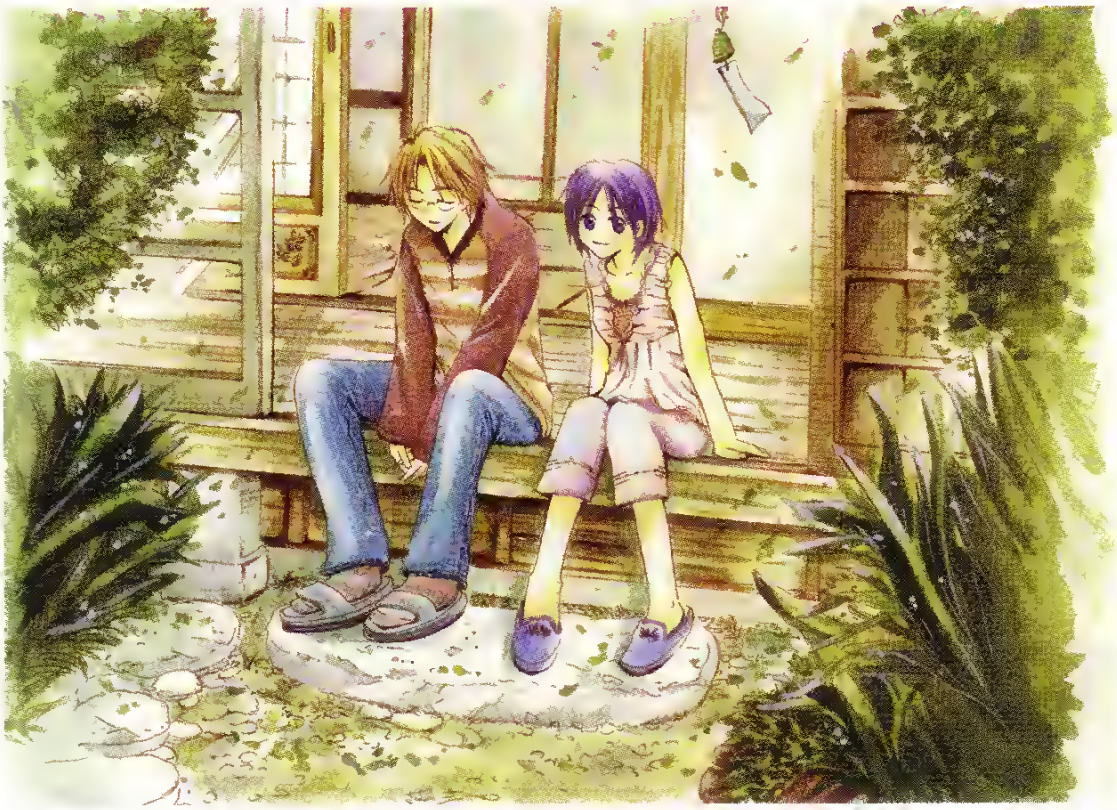
Pg. 80
Okonomiyaki – An Osaka regional specialty, *okonomiyaki* is a delicious mixture of eggs, veggies, meats, and just about anything else you want thrown together and cooked up on a grill right in front of you. It's sort of like a cross between an omelet and a pancake.

Pg. 103
Gakuran—Natsu's K High School uniform is a gakuran, a military-style uniform commonly worn in all-boys schools.

Pg. 193
The Pillow Book — The poem that Natsu is trying to remember was written by Sei Shonagon, a high-ranking lady-in-waiting from the Heian era who wrote one of Japan's most famous classics, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*. The subject of this particular poem is a cluster of bright stars known as "Subaru" in Japan (called "the Pleiades" by the Greeks).

In the next volume of
crossroad
Will the forbidden love of a teacher make Kajitsu forget Natsu...
...or will it lead to the revelation of her darkest secrets?
Crossroad Vol. 3
Available May 2006

crossroad



Less than siblings, more than friends...

Life in a house with no grown-ups seems to be doing wonders for Kajitsu. For the first time in her life, she has a best friend, and to everyone's surprise, she's taken an interest in boys. Too bad her crush is on the new Calligraphy teacher Akai-sensei! Things aren't going quite as well for her step-brother and classmate Natsu. As the smartest kid in school, his teachers hope he'll boost the school's sagging reputation by getting into Japan's top university—no pressure! And Natsu still hasn't come to terms with the tragic events that took away the gentle smile that Kajitsu so loved. What happened to him in those years apart?

$10.99 USA

$10.99

ISBN 0-9768957-6-5

51099>

9 780976 895763

go!comi

visit our website at www.gocomi.com

RATED OT OLDER TEEN 16+